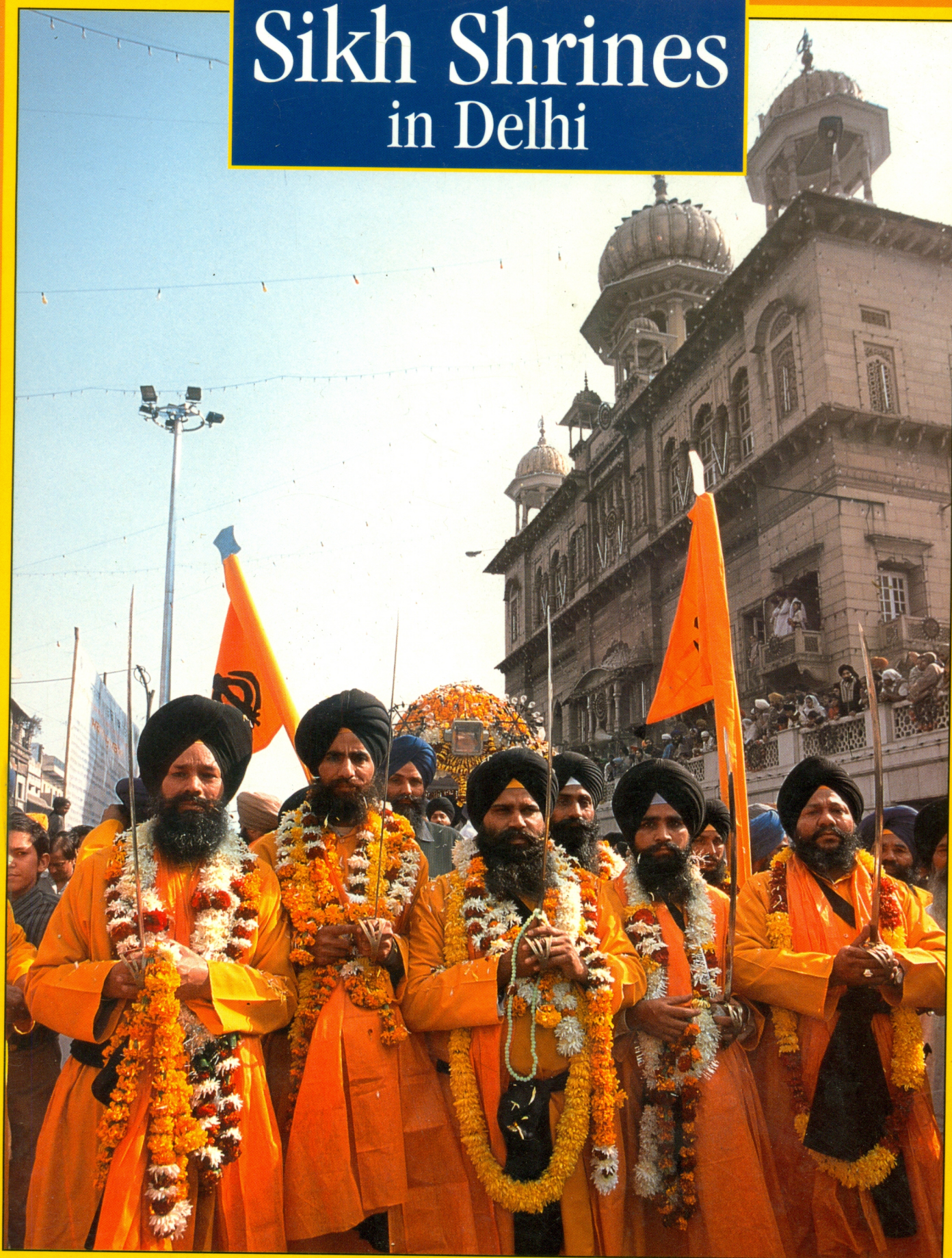


Sikh Shrines in Delhi



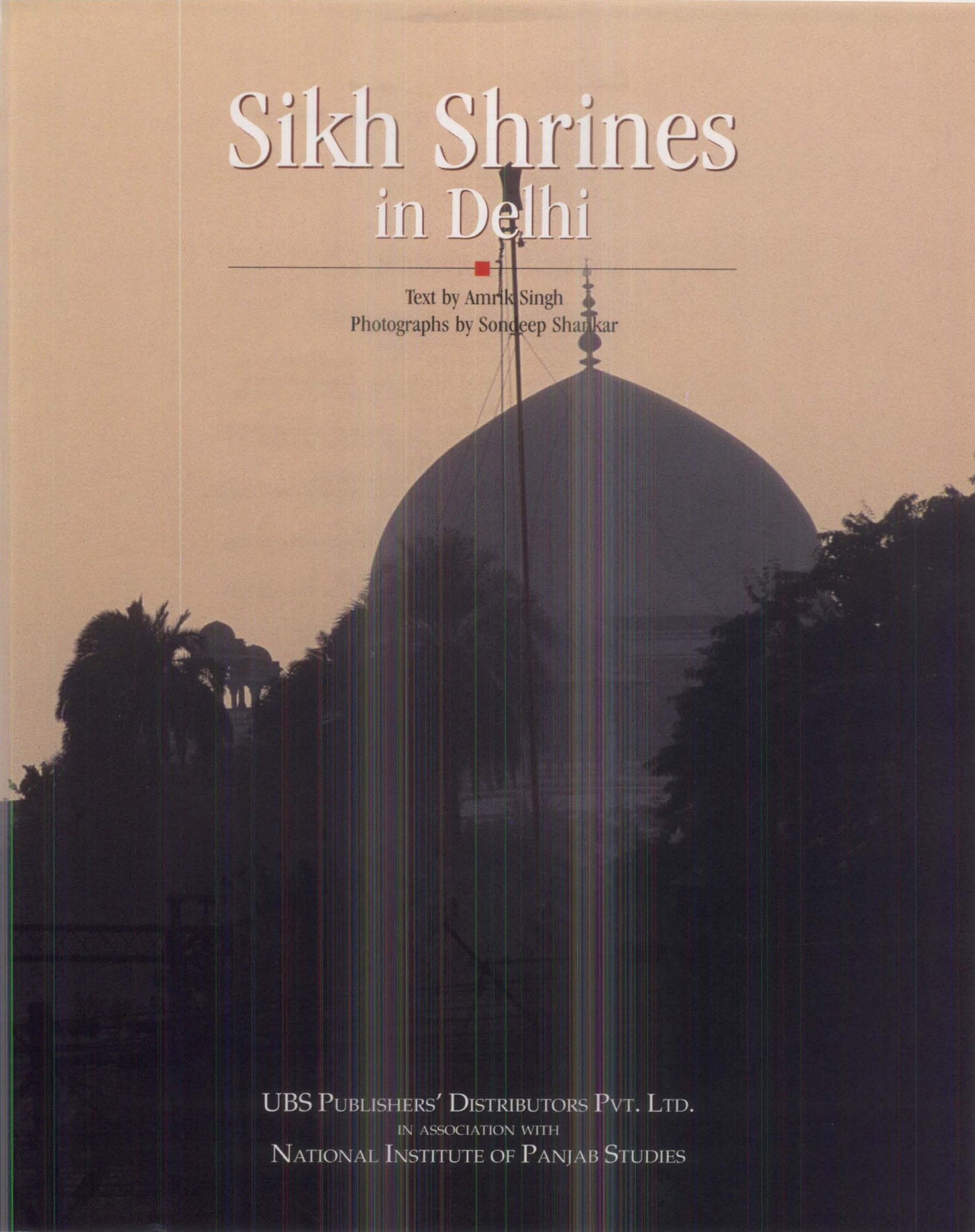
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Sikh Shrines

in Delhi



Sikh Shrines in Delhi



Text by Amrik Singh
Photographs by Sondeep Shankar

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Cover: Panj Piare leading the Nagar Kirtan from
Gurdwara Sis Ganj

Half title page: A couple lighting candles at
Gurdwara Nanak Piao on Guru Nanak's birthday

Title spread: A panoramic view of Gurdwara
Damdama Sahib

Foreword

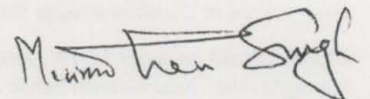
The National Institute of Panjab Studies was established in 1990 to promote research on different aspects of Punjabi life and letters. The Panjab University, Chandigarh, subsequently recognized the Institute as an advanced centre of learning. Apart from promoting research, the Institute has also been organising lectures, seminars and conferences. Some conferences were also organized in collaboration with other institutions such as the Department of Multicultural Education, University of London, Department of South Asian Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and the Centre for Global Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara. To mark fifty years of India's independence the Institute organised an international seminar on 'Partition in Retrospect' in collaboration with the India International Centre, New Delhi.

In connection with the tercentenary of the Khalsa in 1999, the Institute took up a major research project of locating and cataloguing relics belonging to the Sikh Gurus and other historical personalities. Our research team led by the Director of the Institute, visited various parts of India and Pakistan, and located and listed a number of valuable relics. During their fieldwork, our team located some very precious relics such as the *chola* of Guru Nanak, the *chola* of Guru Hargobind, *chola*, *dastar* and other relics of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur, sword-belt, *godri* and flag of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Our team took pictures of these and other precious relics and recorded popular history connected with these objects. As a result of the initiative taken by the Institute, INTACH has taken up the conservation of some of these relics.

With a view to sharing the results of our research with the larger audience and creating awareness for proper preservation of the endangered heritage of Panjab and conservation of the valuable relics, the Institute decided to bring out a series of pictorial books under the Panjab Heritage Series.

Four books published in the first phase were launched in the Rashtrapati Bhawan on the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev in November, 2001. In view of the encouraging response the Institute is now preparing another set of four books in the second phase.

The Institute would like to record its gratitude to the Department of Culture, Government of India, for its initial grant for preparing a 'Catalogue of the Sikh Relics', to the Government of the National Capital of Delhi for its financial support for publication of these books and to various institutions and individuals for allowing the Institute's team access to their rich collections. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Governing Council and staff of the Institute, without whose active cooperation it would not have been possible to bring out these volumes.



Manmohan Singh

President
National Institute of Panjab Studies
Bhai Vir Singh Marg
New Delhi - 110 001

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- The National Museum, New Delhi
- The National Archives of India, New Delhi
- The Panjab State Archives and the Panjab State Museum, Chandigarh, Patiala and Amritsar
- The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, for permitting us to take photographs of the relics in the Toshakhana of the Golden Temple and sacred weapons at the Akal Takhat, Amritsar, Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur, Takhat Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo
- Takhat Sri Patna Sahib, Bihar
- Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded
- The Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh
- Capt. Amarinder Singh, New Moti Bagh Palace, Patiala
- The Bagrian family at Quila Bagrian
- The Sangha family of Drolli Bhai Ki
- Family of Mai Desan, Chak Fateh Singhwala
- Family of Bhai Rupa, Village Bhai Rupa, Dist. Bhatinda
- Family of Bhai Dalla, Talwandi Sabo, Dist. Bhatinda
- Mrs. Jyoti Rai, American Numismatic Society
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- Department of Archeology and Museums, Government of Pakistan, for permission to take photographs of Relics of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his family in Princess Bamba collection, Lahore Fort Museum, Lahore
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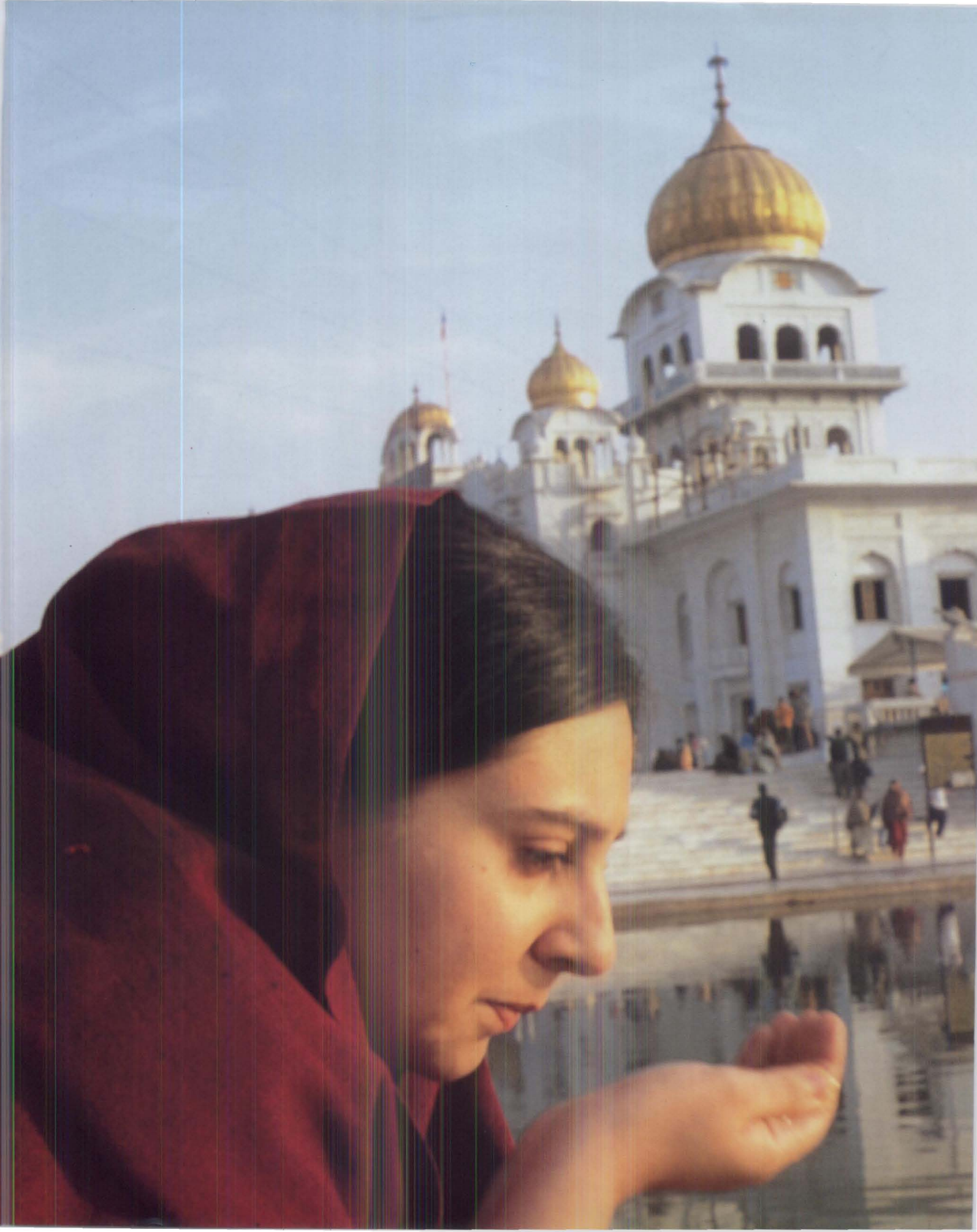
Facing page: A devotee at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

Double spread on pages 8-9: Congregation inside Gurdwara Bangla Sahib listening to kirtan

Double spread on pages 10-11: Guru ka langar being served at Gurdwara Mata Sundri

Double spread on pages 12-13: Devotees offering homage to the Guru Granth Sahib during Nagar Kirtan

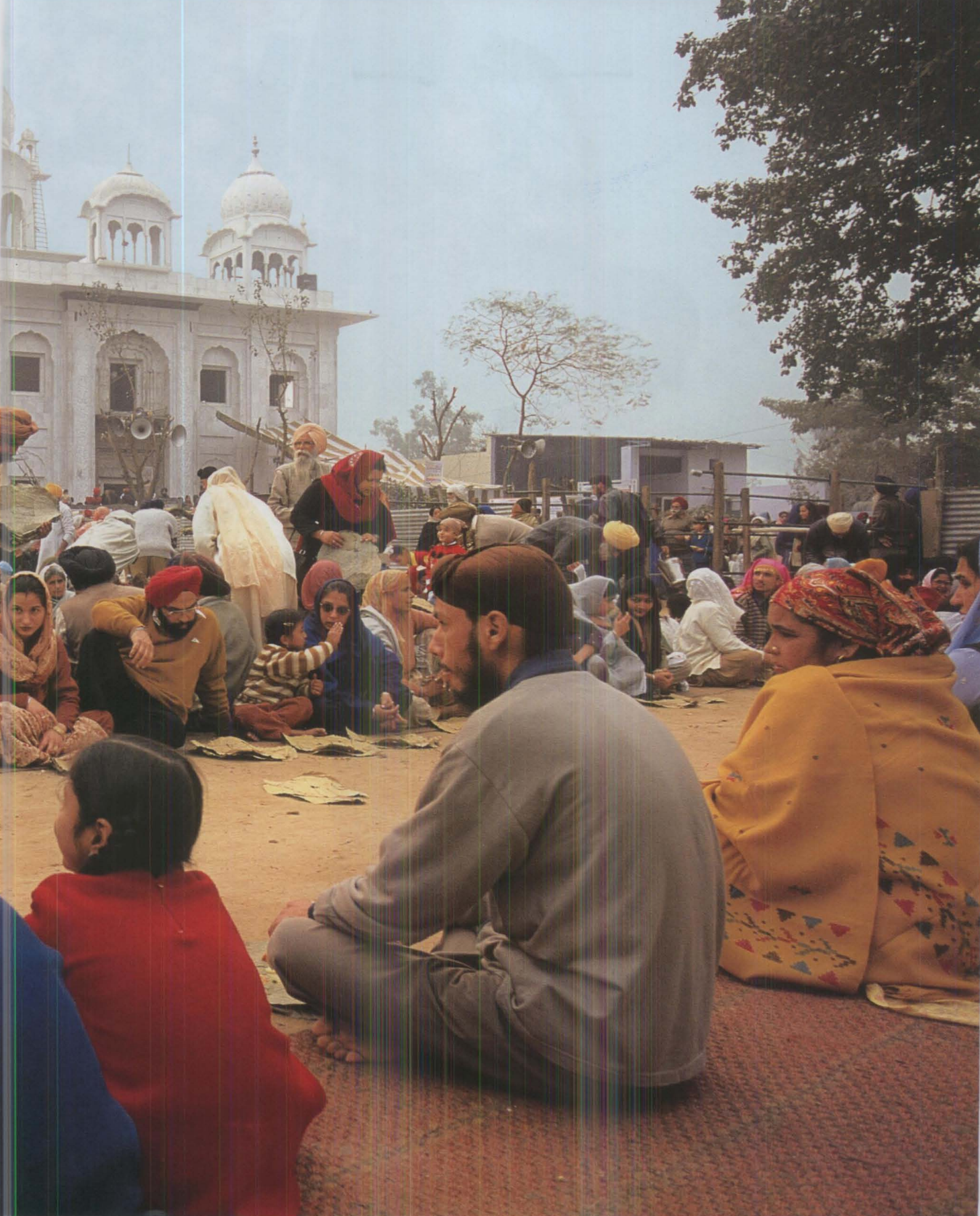
Double spread on pages 14-15: Engrossed in meditation in the parikrama of sarovar (Gurdwara Bangla Sahib)

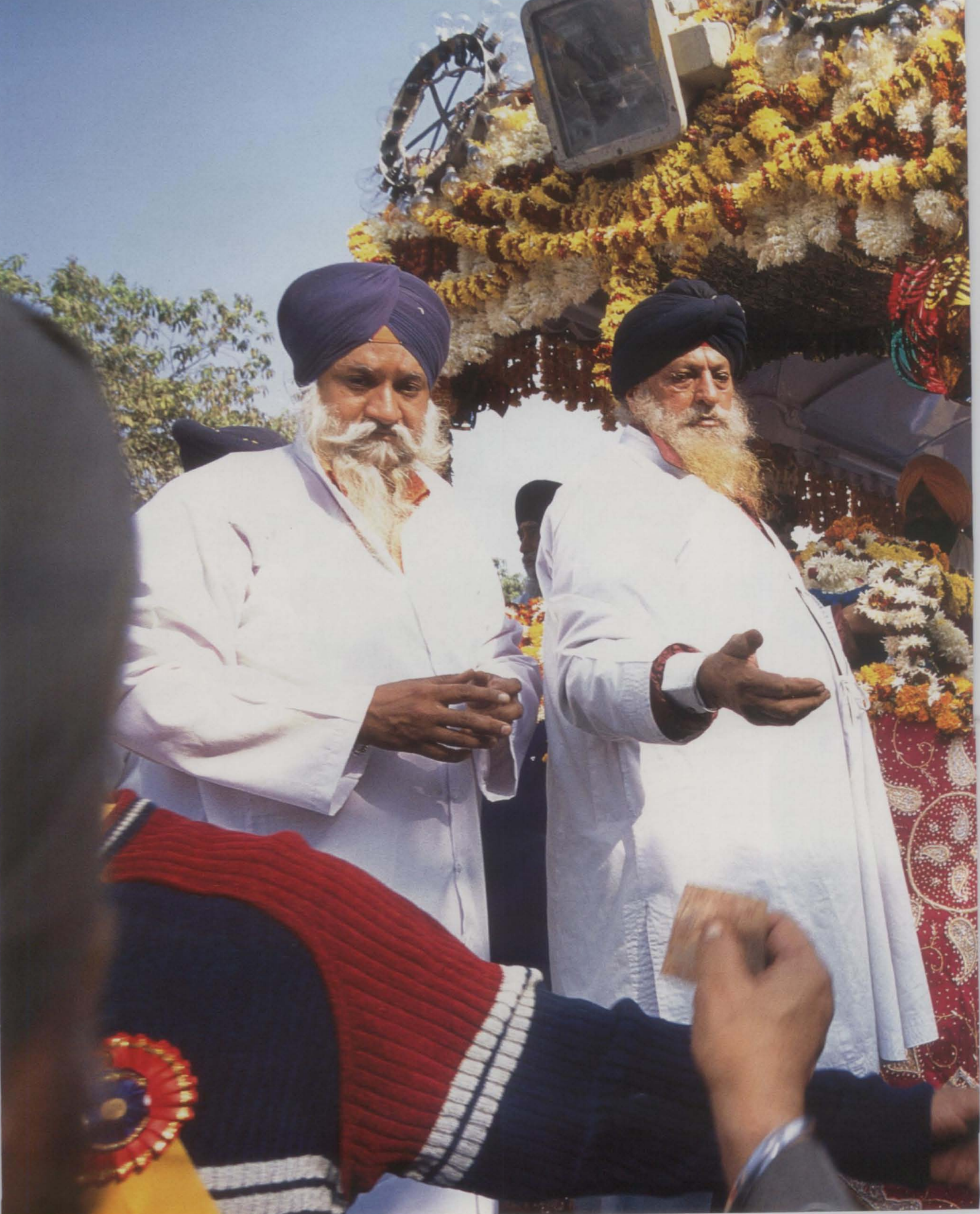




















As a religion, Sikhism is unique in one respect. Most major religions of the world were founded by outstanding individuals and are associated with their name. So is Sikhism, but with one difference. Guru Nanak, without question, was the founder of this faith. However, he did something which no one else had done earlier. Before his death, he nominated one of his followers, Lehna, who was renamed Angad, to succeed him. Angad and the successive gurus in turn did the same thing—each one of them nominated a successor. This system of nomination of successors continued for almost two centuries. Nine gurus followed Guru Nanak. Each one of them contributed something new to the body of thought and beliefs that ultimately came to constitute Sikhism.

During these two centuries, things changed a great deal. For instance, Guru Nanak witnessed Babar's advent into India and wrote about it with great feeling and insight. Successive Sikh gurus encountered different Mughal emperors and interacted with them on more than one occasion. The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, lived during Aurangzeb's rule and survived him by a year or so. He passed away during the reign of Bahadur Shah, Aurangzeb's successor.

Before his death, Guru Gobind Singh took an important decision. He decreed that after him there shall be no successor. Instead, the *Guru Granth* will be taken to be the Guru Eternal. Since then, it has come to be accepted that a gurdwara is built around the institution of the *Guru Granth* to which people bow in worship and seek guidance and solace.

Concept of Congregation

Like several other religions, Sikhism believes strongly in the concept of congregation. In addition to prayer at home, people are expected to pray together. Sikhism has also introduced a new feature. In a Sikh gurdwara, musical recitation of the hymns contained in the *Guru Granth* is a central feature of the service. In most of the historic gurdwaras, the normal routine starts with the installation of the Holy Book; the morning service is followed by *kirtan* and *katha* with the Holy Book being taken for the night after the *Kirtan Sohila*.



Above: A Granthi in attendance to Guru Granth Sahib

Facing page: Devotees taking amrit at the historic chobcha of Gurdwara Bangla Sahib



It may be added here that the entire *Guru Granth* which has thousands of hymns is set to music. Before any hymn begins, it is indicated precisely to which *raga* it conforms. Expertise in music is therefore an integral part of the Sikh mode of worship. This practice goes back to the early days of its founder, Guru Nanak. Of his two constant companions, one was a professional musician named Mardana. He was a Muslim who kept him company throughout his life. He accompanied Guru Nanak for several decades when he undertook his tireless spiritual journeys in various parts of Asia and the Middle-East.

Since several of the gurus were inveterate travellers, it stands to reason that they visited a large number of places. According to the generally accepted rationale, there are two types of gurdwaras. The first are historic gurdwaras connected with the gurus and their families or important Sikh personalities. The second are those gurdwaras which have been established by the Sikhs in different parts of India and abroad for the benefit of the community.

Facing page: Guru Granth Sahib occupies central place in the Sikh shrine

Below: Devotees in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib



Since there were as many as ten Sikh gurus and they travelled to various places, the number of historic Sikh gurdwaras is quite large. Almost half the states in India have such historic gurdwaras. These are in addition to those that are to be found in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh and some other countries.

Delhi as a Sikh Centre

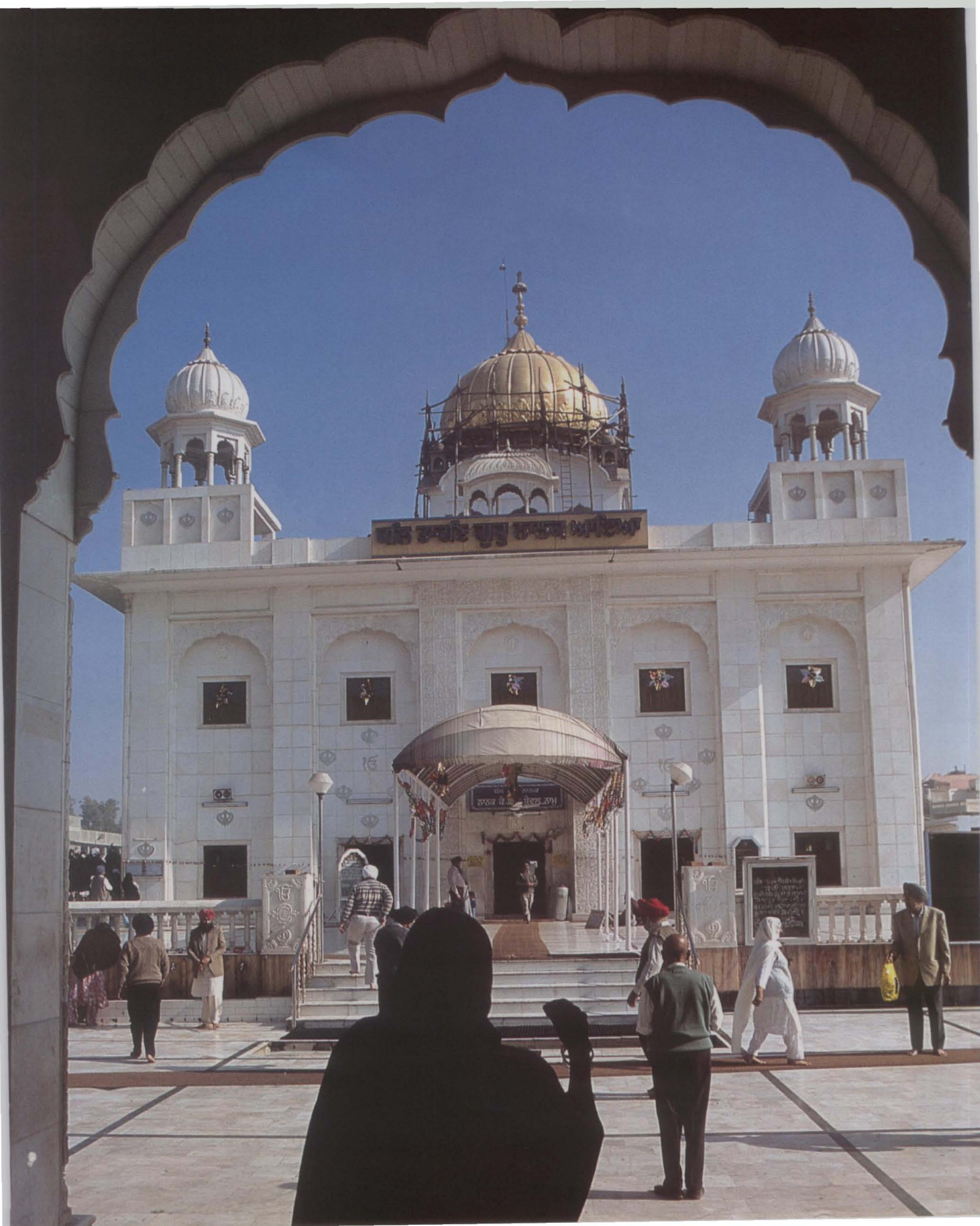
While the Sikhs are mainly concentrated in Panjab since 1947, they are to be found in almost a hundred countries around the globe. A substantial number of them are spread all over India, particularly after 1947. Today Delhi has a larger concentration of Sikhs than any other city. This has come about

Facing page: School children enthusiastically participate during Nagar Kirtan in the Capital

Below: Relics of Guru Gobind Singh being taken for Nagar Kirtan from the premises of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan







because Delhi is much larger than any city of Panjab where most of the Sikhs are to be found. According to the 2001 census, the number of Sikhs in Delhi is approximately seven lakh though there are some who claim that their number is much larger than the figure given in the census.

Historically speaking, however, Delhi has always been connected with Sikh history. This happened largely because Delhi was the capital of the country. Out of ten Sikh gurus, five of them actually visited it: they were Guru Nanak, Guru Hargobind, Guru Harkrishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. While Guru Harkrishan died in Delhi of small pox, Guru Teg Bahadur was executed by the orders of Aurangzeb. Apart from that, there are a number of Sikh shrines in Delhi which are intimately connected with Sikh history. While details will be provided later, it can be said without any contradiction that several of them can be described as major shrines which visitors from outside make it a point to visit.

Gurdwara Nanak Piao

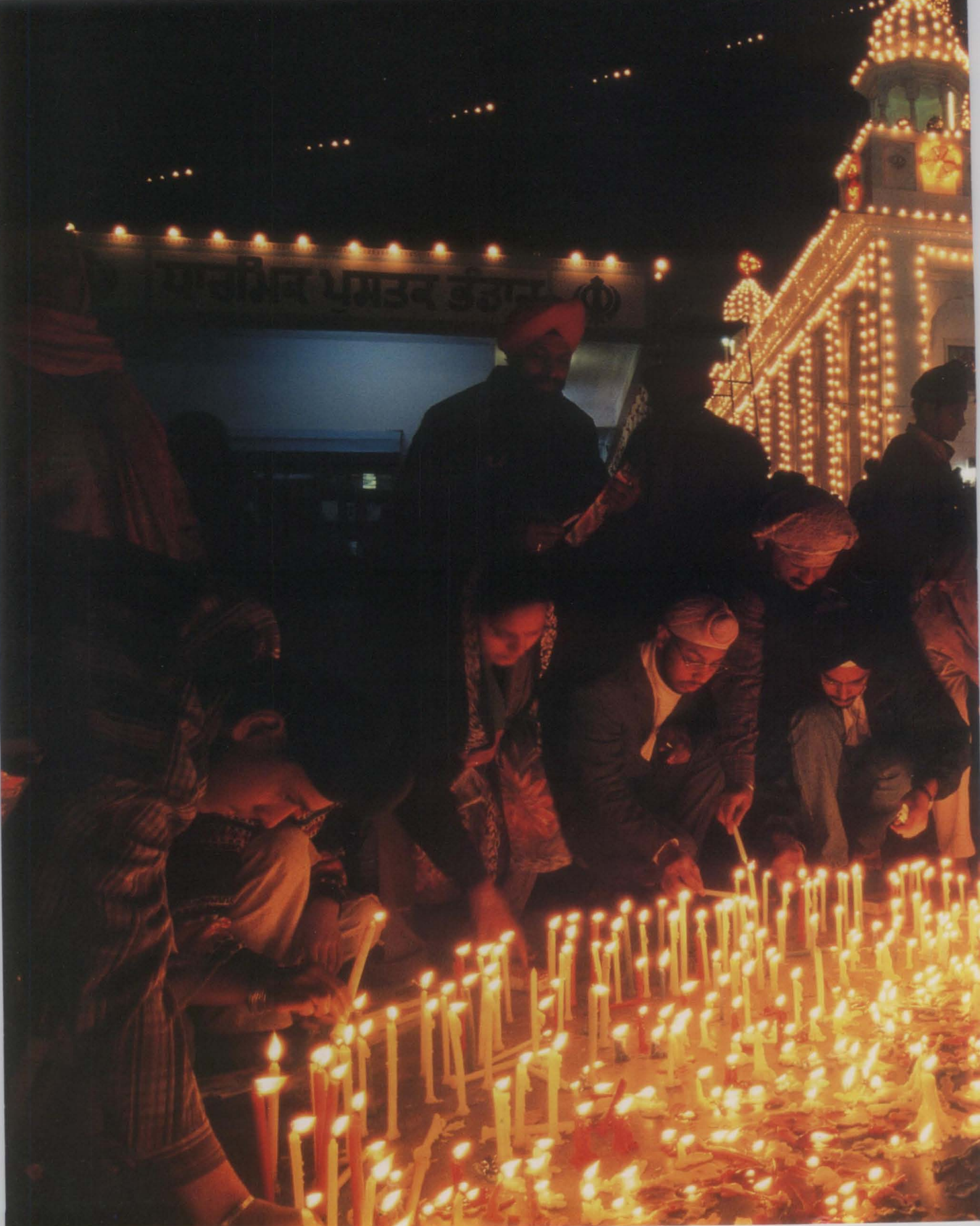
The oldest Sikh shrine in Delhi is Gurdwara Nanak Piao. It is situated to the north of Subzi Mandi, one of the oldest parts of Delhi, along the Grand Trunk Road. The ruler of Delhi at that time was Sikander Lodhi. During his travels, Guru Nanak went to Kurukshetra and then, after his visit to that holy place, made his way to Delhi. He did not actually enter Delhi but camped on the outskirts of the city. Word got around about his arrival. A large number of people started visiting him and brought him gifts which he distributed to the visitors.

Within a short span of time, thousands of people started visiting the place and it developed as a place of pilgrimage. The owner of the garden where Guru Nanak had settled down donated the place and it came to be called Nanak Piao. Originally, it is said, its name was Pau Sahib.

There is a story associated with the visit of Guru Nanak that may be recalled here. One of the visitors was seen crying over his elephant having died. Upon enquiry, Guru Nanak was told the reason for that man shedding such copious tears. Guru Nanak, however, told the owner of the elephant that he was mistaken for the elephant was alive. This made him happy and

Left: Front view of Gurdwara Nanak Piao

*Following double spread:
Gurdwara Nanak Piao lit up during Guru Nanak's
birthday celebrations*





Below: Historic well of Gurdwara Nanak Piao with sweet drinking water dug under the advise of Guru Nanak

Facing page: Serene and peaceful environs of a gurdwara provide an ideal place for meditation and introspection

Following double spread: Reflection of Gurdwara Nanak Piao in the sarovar

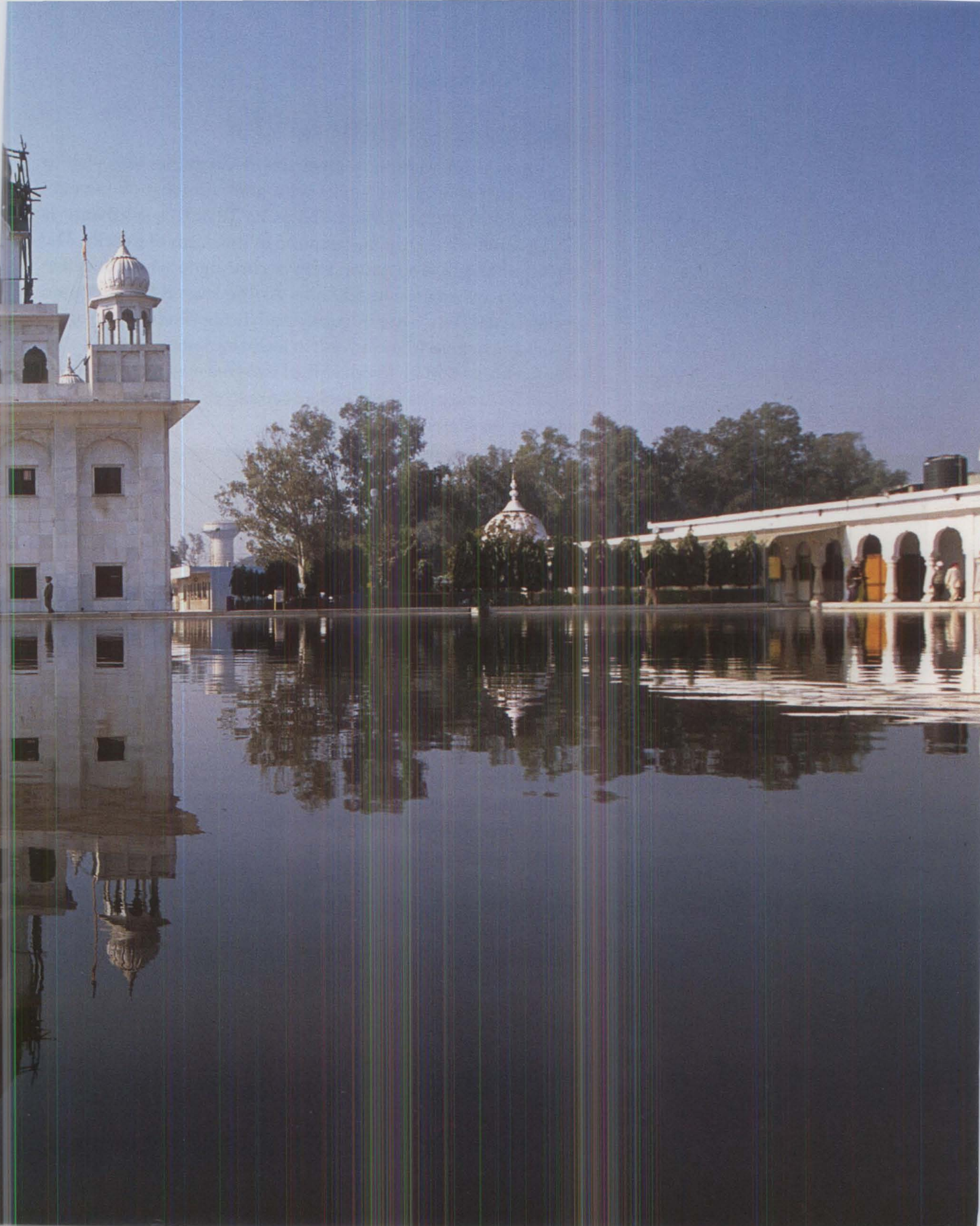
he thanked the Guru for having brought the dead elephant back to life.

Whether this was so or not, the story got around so much so that it reached the Emperor's ears. Some days later, one of the Emperor's elephants died and he sent for Guru Nanak and asked him to bring the animal back to life. The Guru smiled and said something to this effect: Life and death are in the hands of the Almighty and no one should interfere with what God decides. All that man can do is to pray. This answer did not please the Emperor and he was upset about it. In course of time, Guru Nanak resumed his travels and went on to some other place. In memory of that visit, a gurdwara was built at the site and it has continued to attract the devotees from far and near all these centuries.





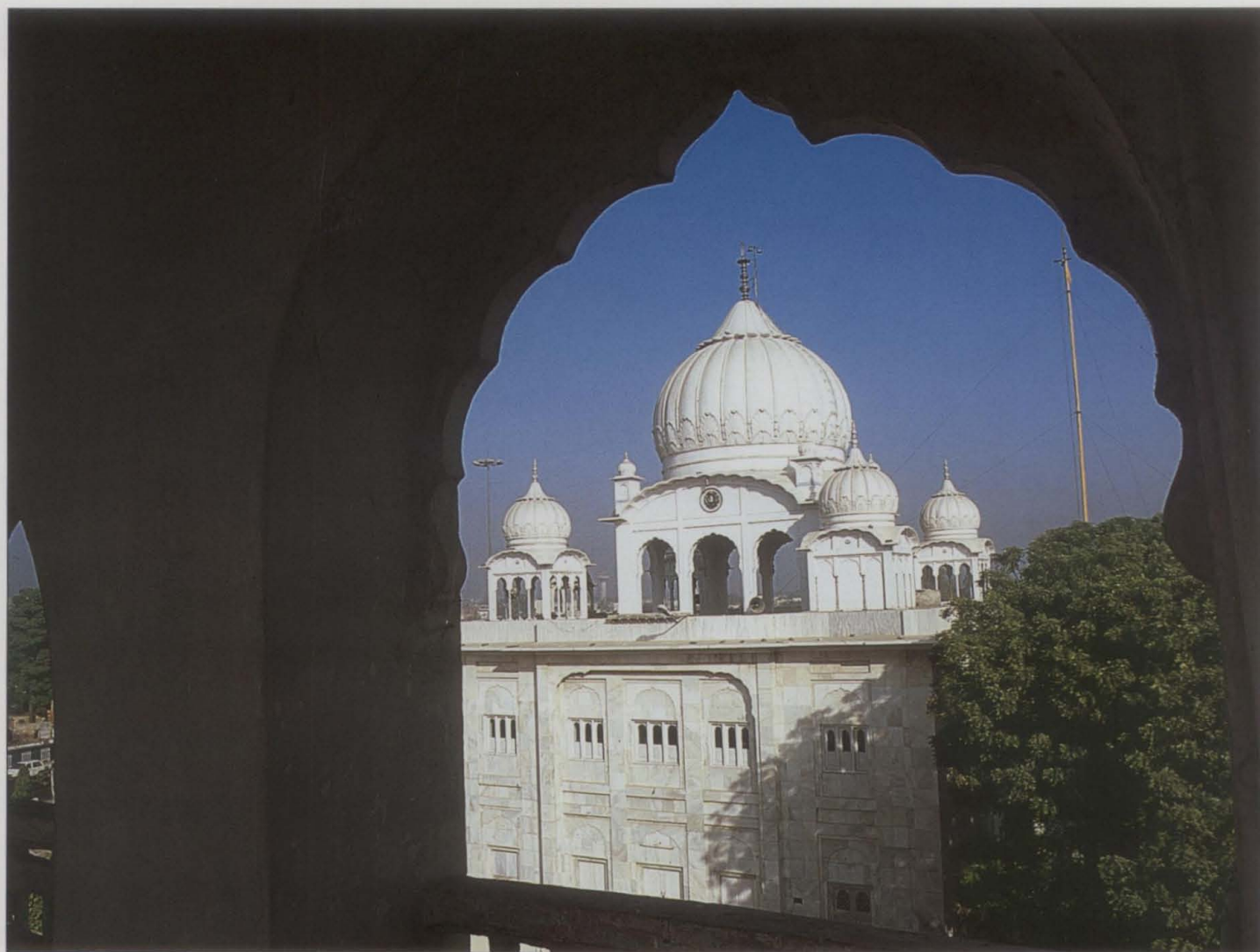




Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila

One of the accidental offshoots of Guru Nanak's visit to Delhi was a chance encounter with a Muslim *deroish* (ascetic) who lived in a place called Majnu ka Tila. This gurdwara is located on the banks of the Yamuna in the north of the city. The legend of Majnu is a Persian story according to which he fell in love with a woman named Laila. As the legend has it, Majnu underwent all kinds of difficulties and disappointments in order to seek his beloved. The *deroish* in Delhi had nothing to do with Majnu except that he lived a life of extreme austerity. So much so that he came to have the looks of an ascetic and people started calling him Majnu.

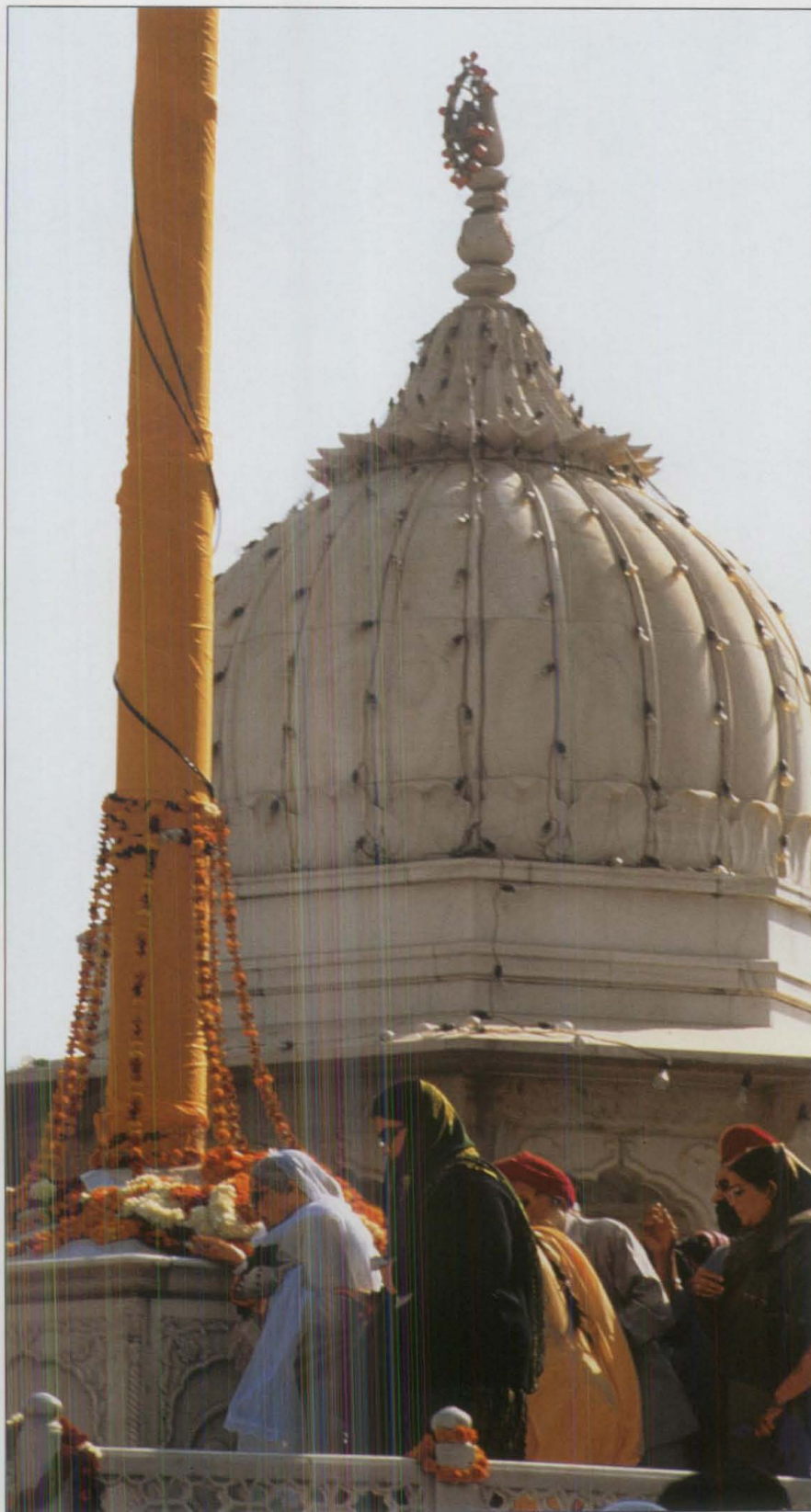
Below: Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila on the banks of river Yamuna



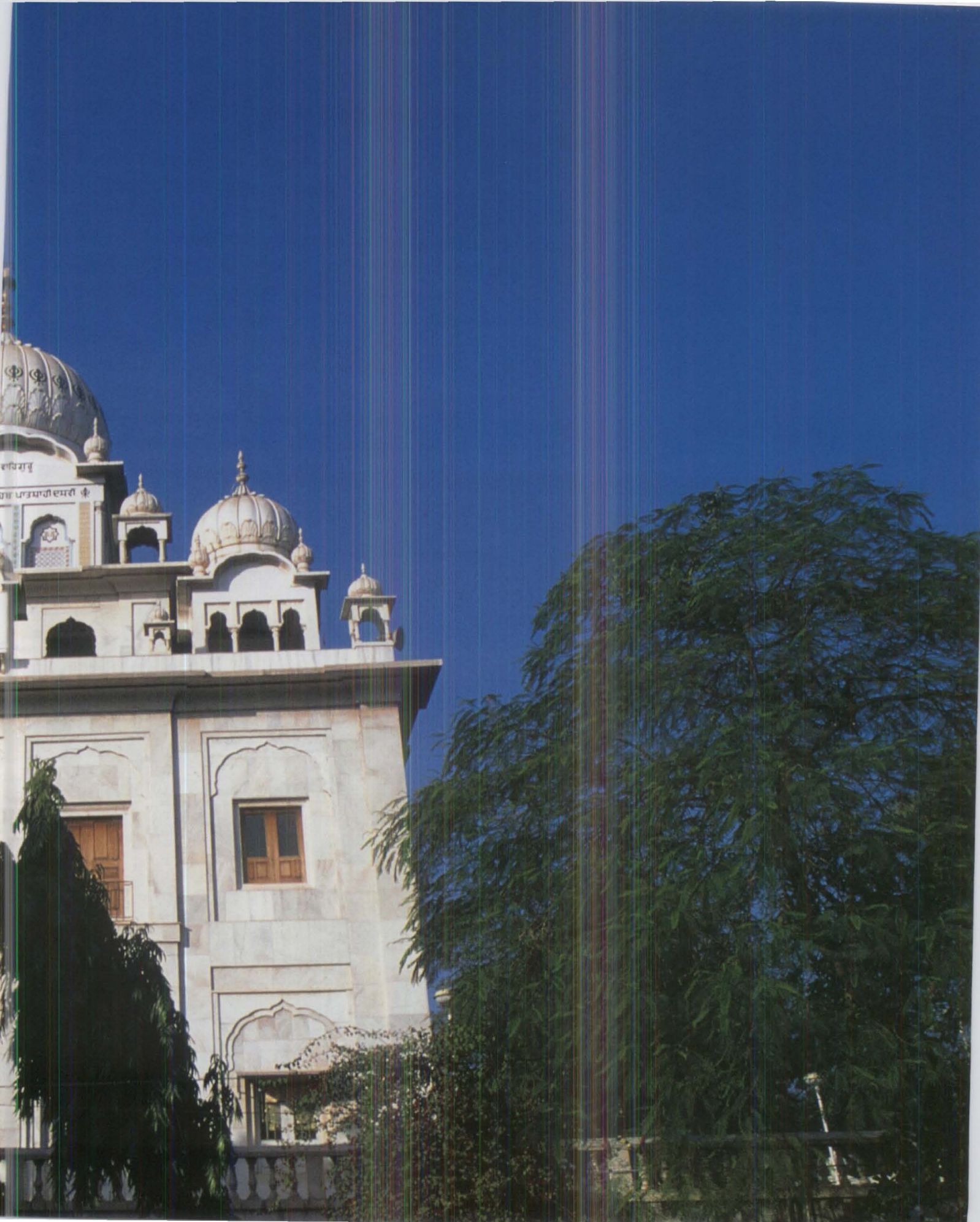
Below: Historic well at Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila

Right: Devotees paying respect to Nishan Sahib at Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila

Following double spread: A panoramic view of Gurdwara Majnu ka Tila







According to a legend still in circulation, Guru Nanak had a series of meetings with the *dervish*. As is widely known, Guru Nanak did not believe in austerity or renunciation. Life, according to him, was to be lived as others live it. Guru Nanak himself had a wife and children and, while living in his village, he worked with his hands and supported himself. In the course of his discussion with the *dervish*, Guru Nanak converted him to this point of view and persuaded him to turn his back on renunciation and live the life of a normal person.

With the passage of time, Majnu ka Tila became a Sikh shrine. Before Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru, was imprisoned in Gwalior Fort, he stayed here. After his release from the fort, he again halted at this place. This shrine comes particularly alive when the *Baisakhi* festival is celebrated in the capital.

Below: Dhadi Jatha singing ballads from Sikh history



Gurdwara Sis Ganj

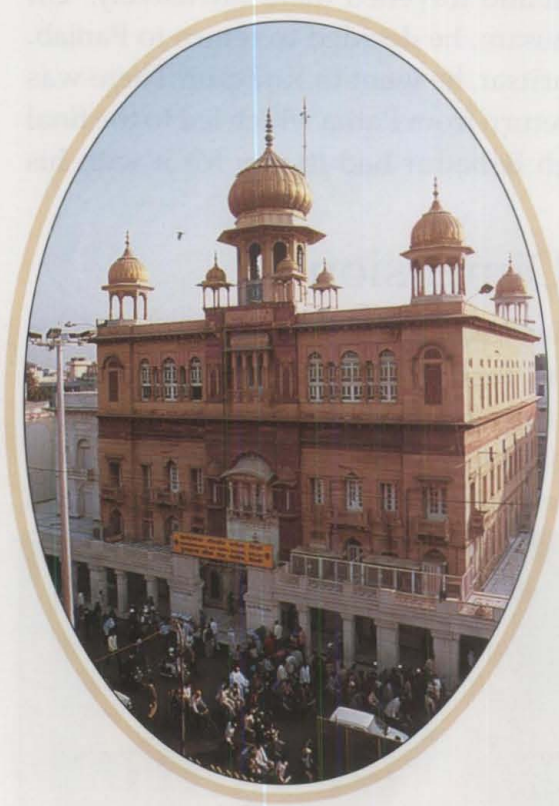
In the heart of Chandni Chowk, this shrine is built on the location where Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru, was beheaded on 11th November 1675. Literally translated, the compound word is made of two words; *sis*, which means head, and *ganj*, which means treasure.

During the passage of time from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur—a period of almost two centuries—various developments had taken place and each one of them had contributed to the growth of Sikhism in its distinctive way. An important milestone was Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom. He was the fifth guru in the order of succession and compiled the *Guru Granth*. His predecessors, beginning with Guru Nanak, had been composing hymns and leaving it to their successors to take care of their preservation. It was Guru Arjun Dev who conceived the idea of putting all the hymns together.

Compilation of the *Guru Granth* by Guru Arjan Dev was a major development in Sikh religion. In keeping with the Sikh teachings of the unity of Godhead and equality of mankind, Guru Arjan Dev included in the *Guru Granth* not only the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev and his successors but also those of Hindu *bhaktas* and Muslim saints who had preached unity of mankind, including such eminent poets as Kabir and Sheikh Farid. The *Guru Granth* contains 5894 hymns, the largest number of them (2216) having been contributed by the fifth guru himself.

Owing to certain political developments of that period, Jahangir, who had succeeded his father Akbar as the Emperor of India, decided to victimize Guru Arjan. He put him under custody and later had him tortured to death. The entire Sikh movement which had grown from strength to strength during the preceding several decades had now to find a way of dealing with this new phase of persecution by the Mughal rulers. One outcome of it was the militarization of the Sikh community.

A large number of Jats in central Panjab rallied around Guru Hargobind, the son of Guru Arjan, who became the sixth guru. Guru Hargobind started recruiting soldiers and raised an army of his own. After some time, the Guru moved out of Amritsar and migrated to Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills. In



Above: Sis Ganj, symbol of supreme sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur

course of time, that area became an important centre of Sikh activities. The main advantage of having moved away from Amritsar was that, in case of a confrontation, the hilly terrain had a distinct advantage.

During his early career, Guru Tegh Bahadur had settled down in Patna and travelled widely in eastern India. He paid a prolonged visit to Assam and travelled there extensively. On return from his visit to Assam, he decided to return to Panjab. Instead of coming to Amritsar, he went to Kiratpur. There was a development after his return from Patna which led to the final crisis wherein Guru Tegh Bahadur had to pay for it with his life.

The Kashmir Dimension

According to popular tradition, a group of Pundits from Kashmir called upon Guru Tegh Bahadur and sought guidance from him because they were being pressurized to convert to Islam. This they were not prepared to do.

When this dialogue was going on between Guru Tegh

Below: (left) A painting depicting Guru Tegh Bahadur listening to the woes of Kashmiri Pundits (right) Guru Tegh Bahadur in deep meditation, undisturbed by the orders of his execution



Bahadur and the visiting Pundits from Kashmir, Guru Tegh Bahadur's son, Gobind Rai, who was a child of nine years at that time, happened to enter the room. He found his father in a thoughtful and pensive mood. Asked as to why he was so pensive, Guru Tegh Bahadur explained the situation to his son and observed that only a man of God who was not afraid to lose his life could solve this issue. Thereupon, the child said, "Who can be more a man of God than you yourself?" This prompted Guru Tegh Bahadur to tell the Kashmiri Pundits to suggest to the Governor of Kashmir who wanted them to convert to Islam to convey to the Emperor that if Guru Tegh Bahadur could be persuaded to convert to Islam, they would be prepared to follow him.

They carried the message back to Kashmir and it was duly conveyed to Emperor Aurangzeb. In response to summons from Aurangzeb, Guru Tegh Bahadur went to Delhi and was asked to either convert to Islam or face the consequences. If he wanted to escape the consequences, he was told, he could perform some miracle and save himself. Guru Tegh Bahadur refused to

Below: Mute witness, the trunk of the banyan tree inside Gurdwara Sis Ganj under which the ninth Guru was executed

Following double spread: Gurdwara Sis Ganj along with Guru Tegh Bahadur nivas asthan built at the sight of historic kotwali where the ninth Guru stayed in captivity

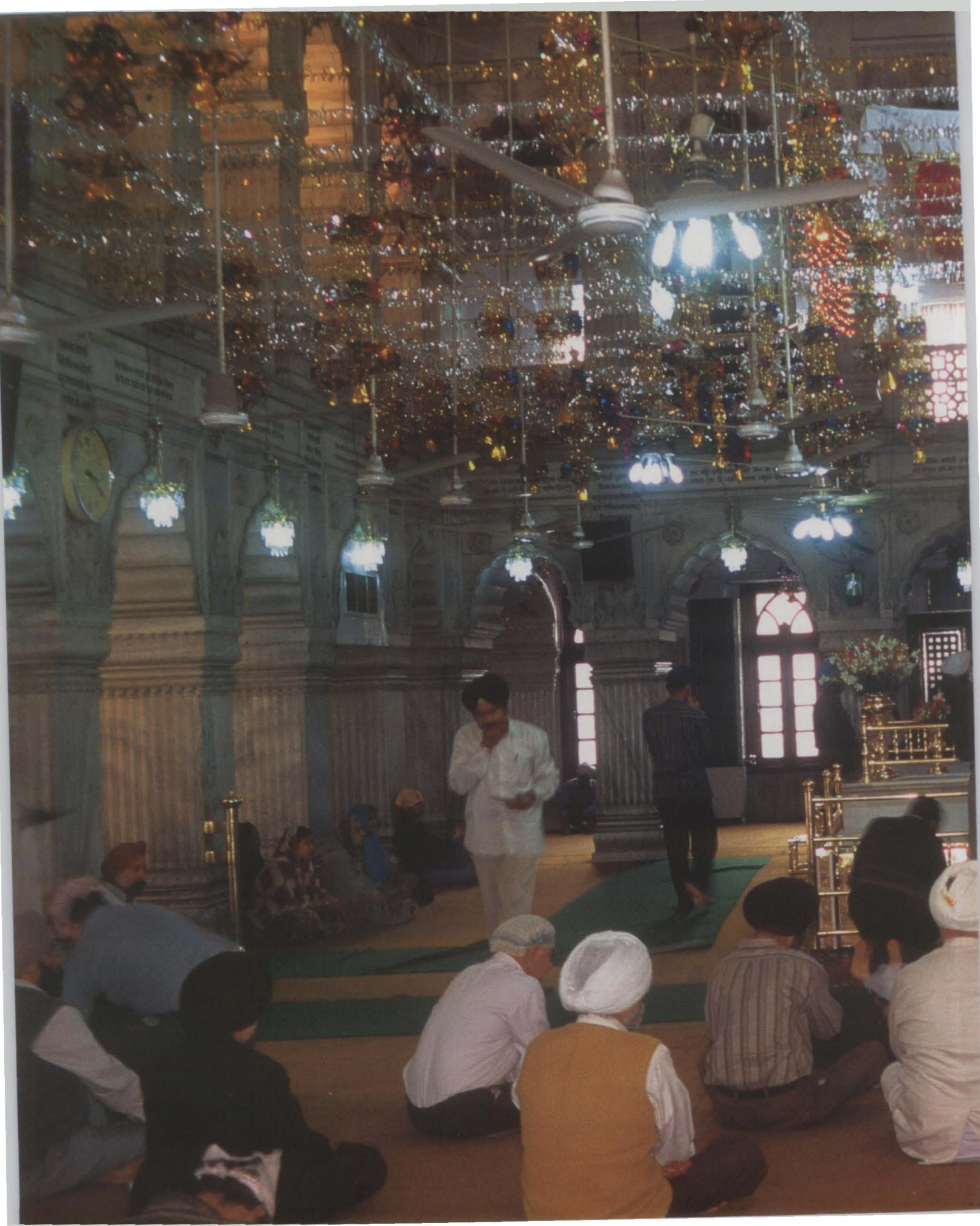
Double spread pages 40-41: Interiors of Gurdwara Sis Ganj especially decorated for Gurburab celebrations

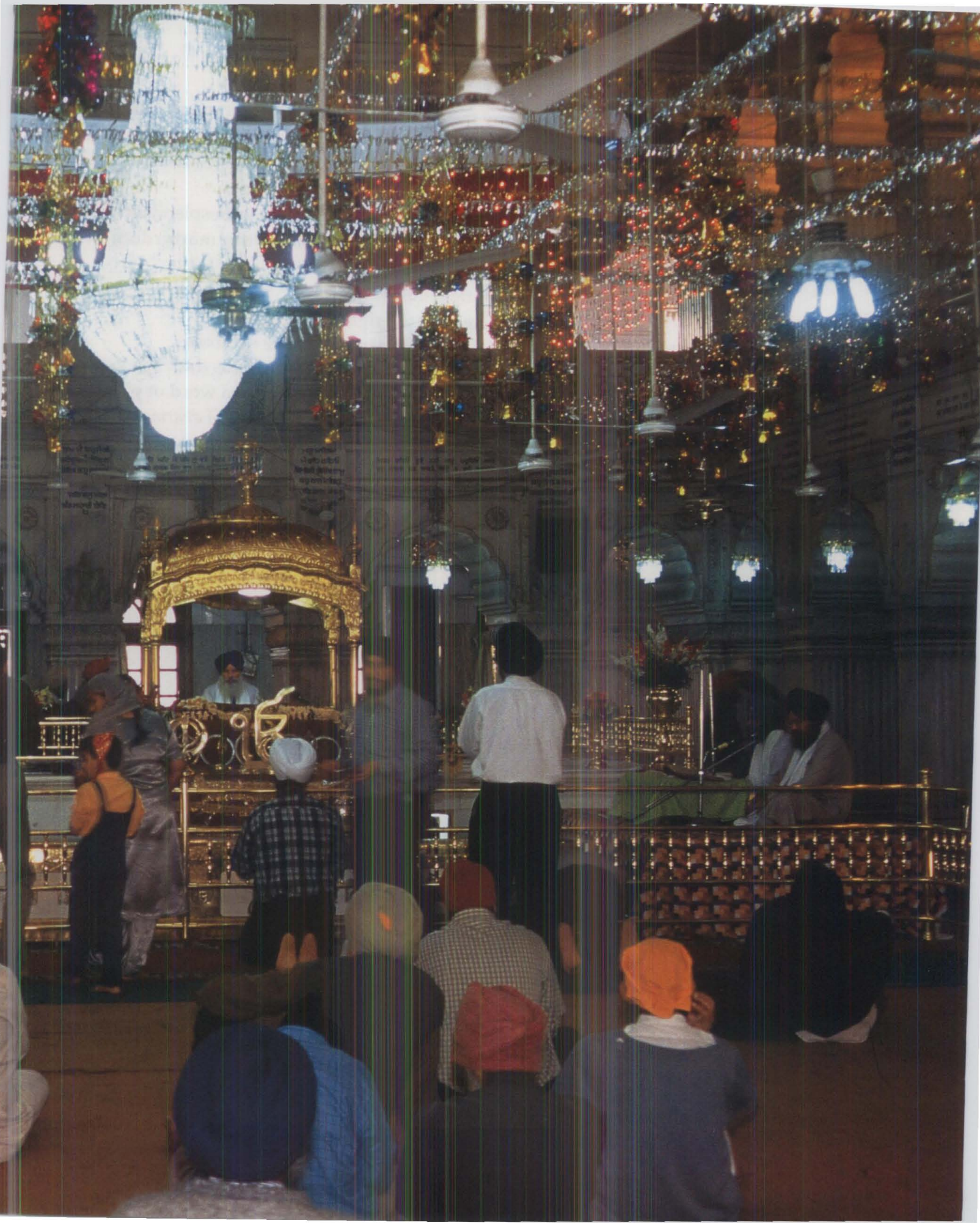




गुरुद्वारा बीसगंज साहिब, दिल्ली
GURUDWARA BIS GANJ SAHIB, DELHI
गुरुदास जीसा गंज राखिब, दिल्ली







perform any miracle and preferred to lay down his life.

Not only was Guru Tegh Bahadur put to death, some of his distinguished disciples, Bhais Mati Das, Sati Das, Dyal Das and several others, were tortured to death.

In his autobiography *Bachitra Natak* (Resplendent Drama), Guru Gobind Singh has described the martyrdom of his illustrious father in this manner:

He sacrificed his life
For protecting the rights of Hindus
To wear sacred thread and caste symbols.
He made the supreme sacrifice in this dark age.
He gave his head, but did not utter a word of pain.
He suffered martyrdom for the sake of *dharma*.
He did this great heroic deed.
He readily gave up his head,
But did not give up his conviction.

Below: A fountain opposite Gurdwara Sis Ganj commemorating the martyrdom of Bhai Mati Das



He avoided performing miracles
A cheap act of fooling people.
For such acts men of God are ashamed.

At this stage, two things need to be said. The first one is that Guru Tegh Bahadur did not believe in idol worship and was highly critical of the caste system and various other rituals which were practised widely by the Hindu community. Despite that fact, and despite his known difference with the prevalent ethos of the Hindus with whom he interacted all the time, Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to stand up for them; and this leads to the second point. Guru Tegh Bahadur is the first example in world history where a person belonging to one faith died in defence of another faith. He was fighting for a principle. He believed that every man was entitled to his own faith and could not be forced to give it up and accept another. The demand to get converted to Islam therefore was not legitimate.

*Below: Devotees paying homage at the spot of
Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom*

*Following double spread: Museum built to
commemorate the martyrdom of Bhai Mati Das, Bhai
Sati Das and Bhai Dayala*

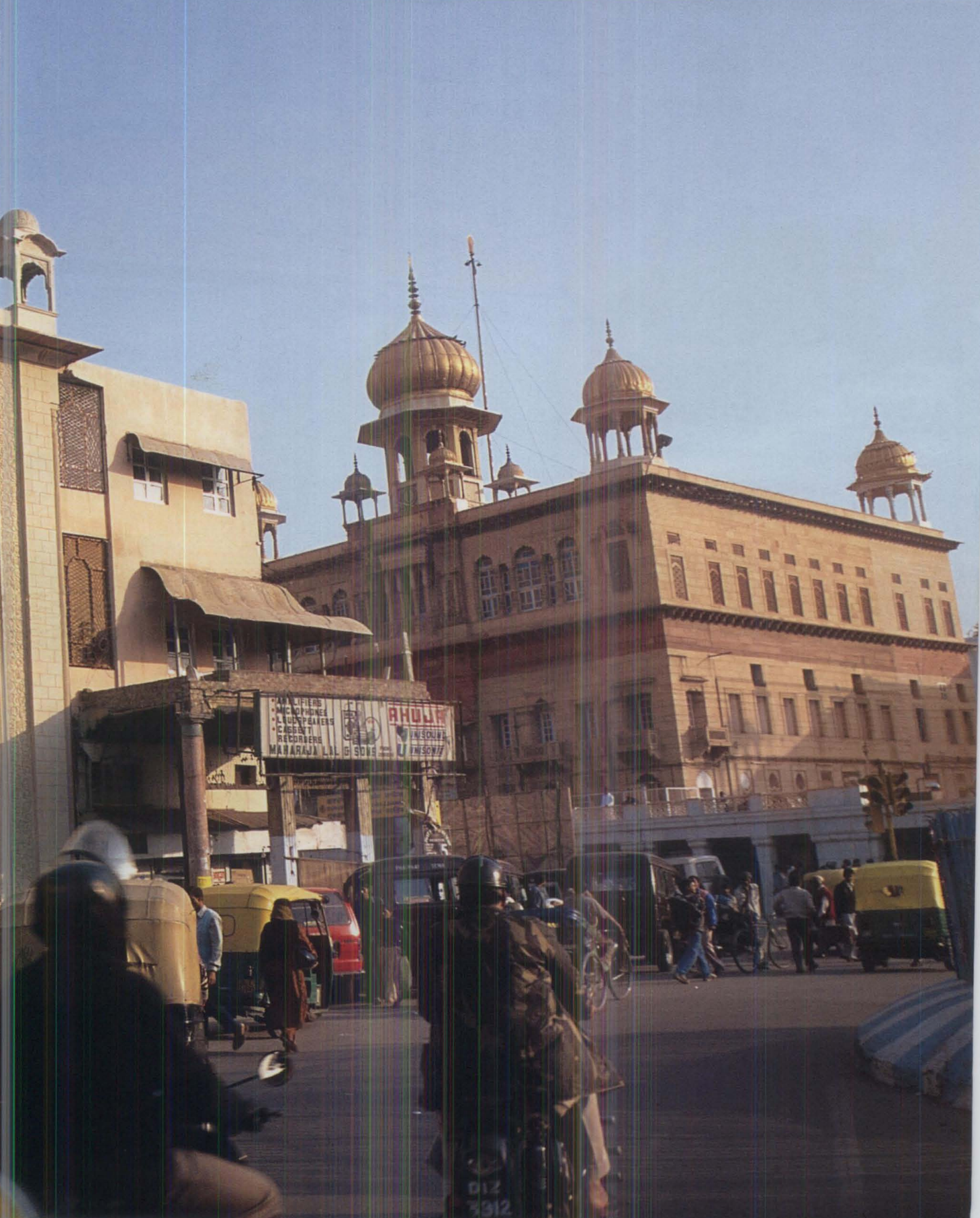
*Double spread pages 46-47: Young Sikhs displaying
martial arts during Nagar Kirtan*





ਭਾਈ ਮਤੀ ਦਾਸ ਭਵਨ
BHAJI MATI DAS BHAWAN
ਭਾਈ ਸਤੀ ਦਾਸ ਭਵਨ

ਭਾਈ ਮਤੀ ਦਾਸ ਭਵਨ
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ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਸੀਸਗੰਜ
GURUDWARA SIS GAN
ਗੁਰੂਦੁਆਰਾ ਸ਼ੀਸ਼ ਗੰਜ

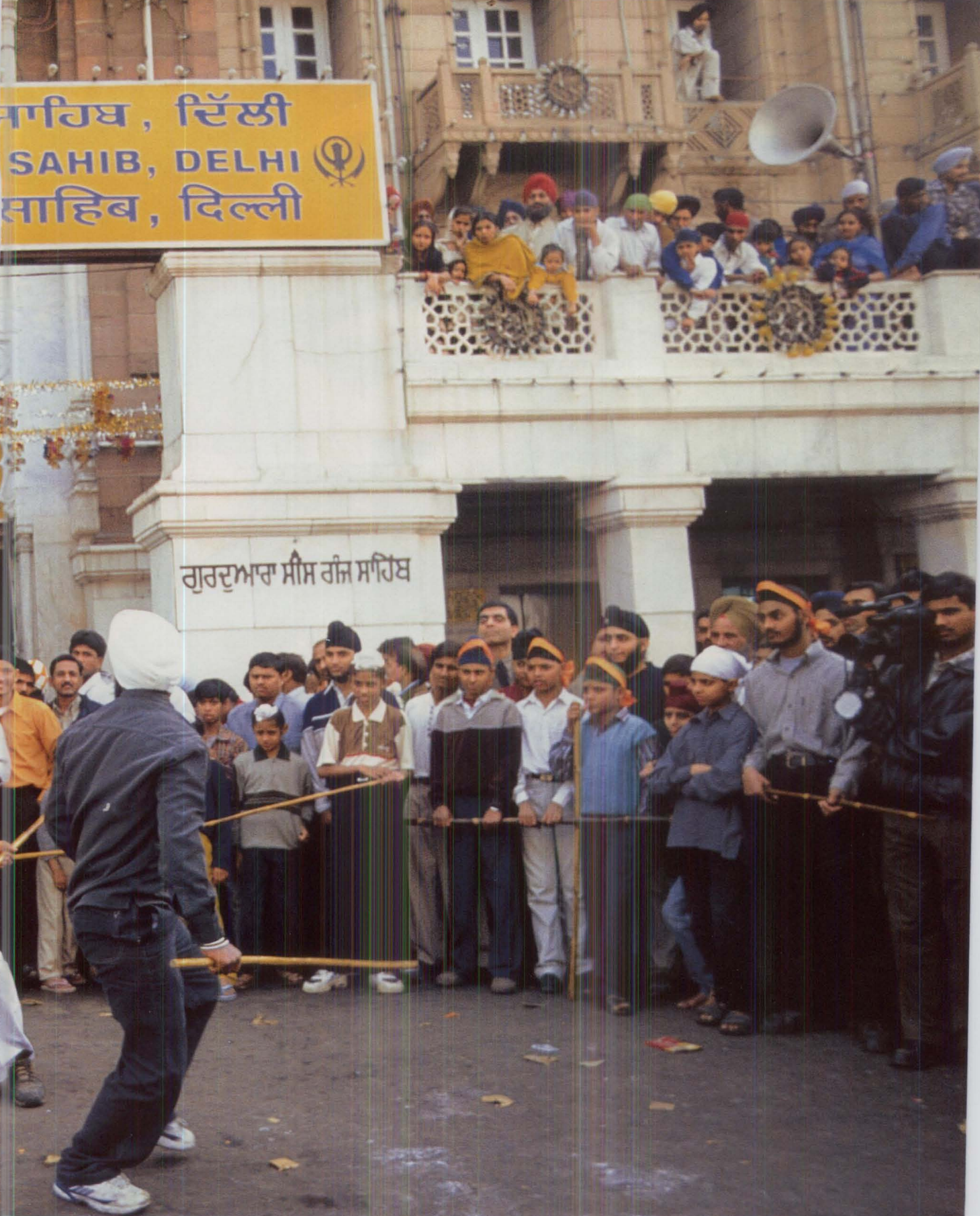
ਗੁਰੂਦੁਆਰਾ ਸੀਸਗੰਜ ਸਾਹਿਬ

PLACE OF MARTYR
SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR

ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਦਿੱਲੀ
SAHIB, DELHI
ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਦਿਲ्ली



ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਸ੍ਰੀਸ਼ ਰੰਜ ਸਾਹਿਬ





The Aftermath

The circumstances under which Guru Tegh Bahadur laid down his life in defence of the right of a person to follow his conscience could not but lead to a strong reaction within the Sikh community. It culminated in the birth of the Khalsa in AD 1699. What Guru Gobind Singh did was to break with the pacifist attitude followed till then. As he put it in his famous letter to Emperor Aurangzeb, "When things go beyond a point of tolerance, it is legitimate to put one's hand to the sword." This is precisely what Guru Gobind Singh did.

He fought a series of battles in defence of the very limited activities in which he was engaged. Then came a stage when there was direct confrontation with the Mughal forces. In the course of various battles that he fought, Guru Gobind Singh lost his sons and a large number of soldiers. The more significant thing was that Guru Gobind Singh inspired his

Left: A Nihang Singh during a procession

Below: A Nihang Singh with hawk. Nihangs and hawks known for their determination and guerilla tactics, are a major attraction during the Nagar Kirtan



Below: Two elderly Sikhs enthusiastically beating the nagara leading the Nagar Kirtan

Facing page: School children dressed as Panj Piare in Nagar Kirtan

Following double spread: Splendour, majesty and glory mark birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak

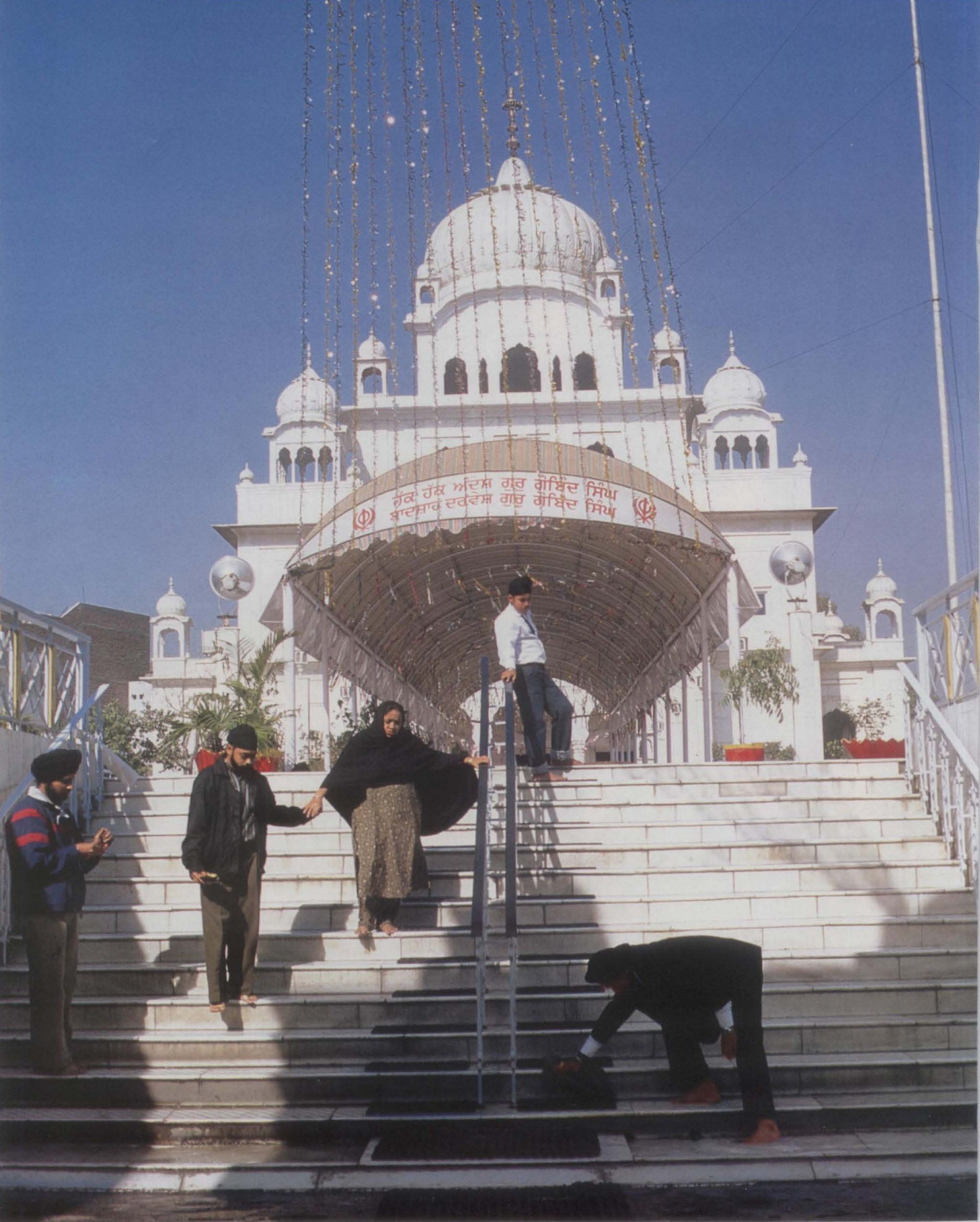
followers into taking up arms in defence of what was just and right. One of his well known prayers to the Lord says that he should have courage enough to be able to do what was right and proper and, when the end was near, he should die in the field of action.











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ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨਾਨਕ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ

Gurdwara Moti Bagh

After Aurangzeb's death in the year 1707, Prince Muazzam, later known as Bahadur Shah, declared himself the Emperor and sent messengers to Guru Gobind Singh to help him in the battle of succession. In the last week of May 1707, both Bahadur Shah and Guru Gobind Singh met in Delhi. The Emperor was camping at the Red Fort while the Guru camped at the place where Gurdwara Moti Bagh now stands. This garden belonged to a *banya* named Moti who was a flourishing leather merchant and had built a colony of cobblers and tanners close by. According to Santokh Singh's *Suraj Prakash*, Guru Gobind Singh shot an arrow from Moti Bagh into the Red Fort informing the Emperor of his arrival. It is also believed that soon after the Guru shot another arrow which had a note attached to it saying that it was not a miracle but something which he had accomplished by practice. At this very site now stands Gurdwara Moti Bagh.

Facing page: Front view of Gurdwara Moti Bagh

Below: Sikh women participating in path bodh

Following page: (above) Panj Piare preparing amrit during special amrit sanchar ceremony arranged by Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee

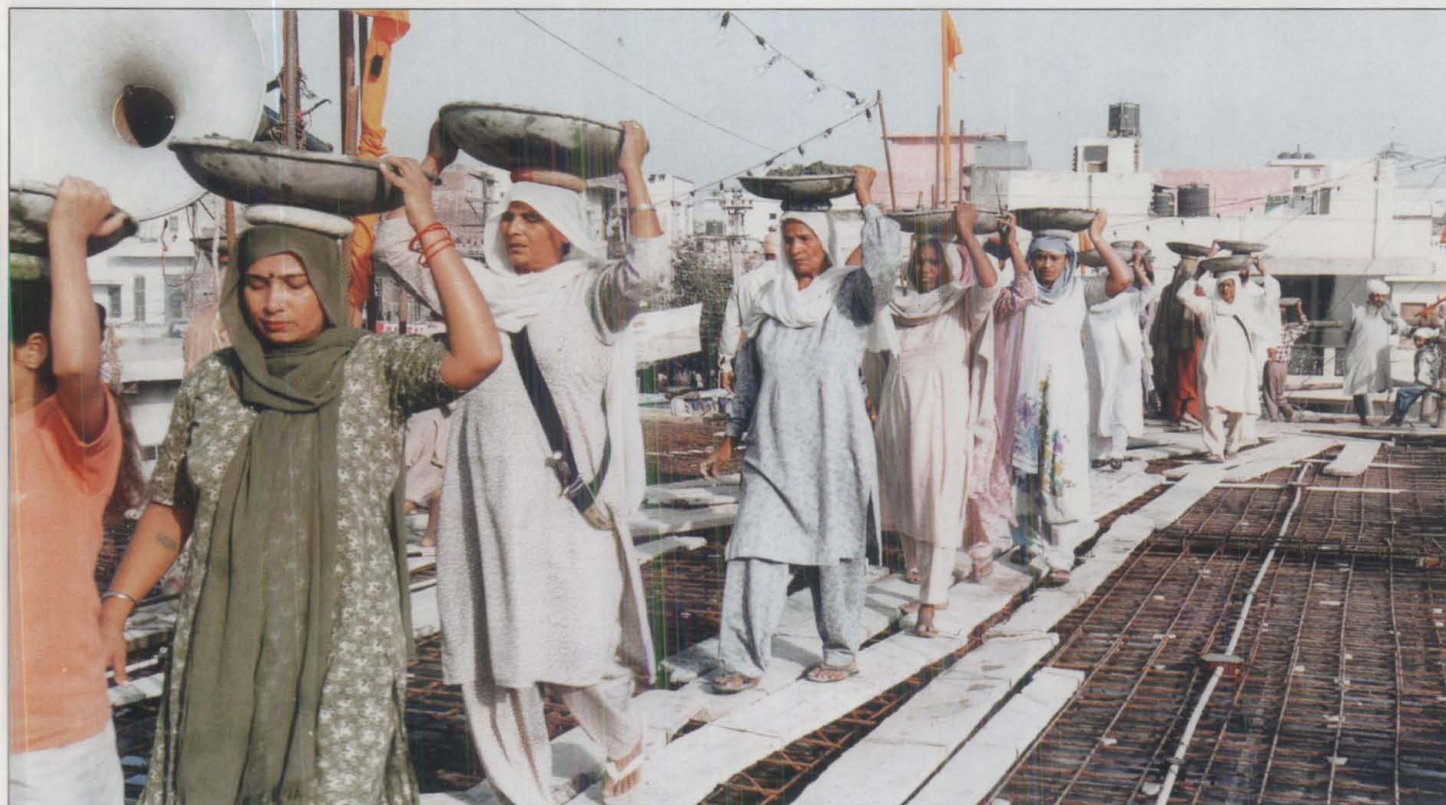
(below) Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, Jathedar Sri Akal Takth seen with members of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee

Page 57: (above) Through his dedicated work of kar seva of historic Sikh shrines, Baba Harbans Singh has become an institution in himself

(below) Women volunteers participating in kar seva





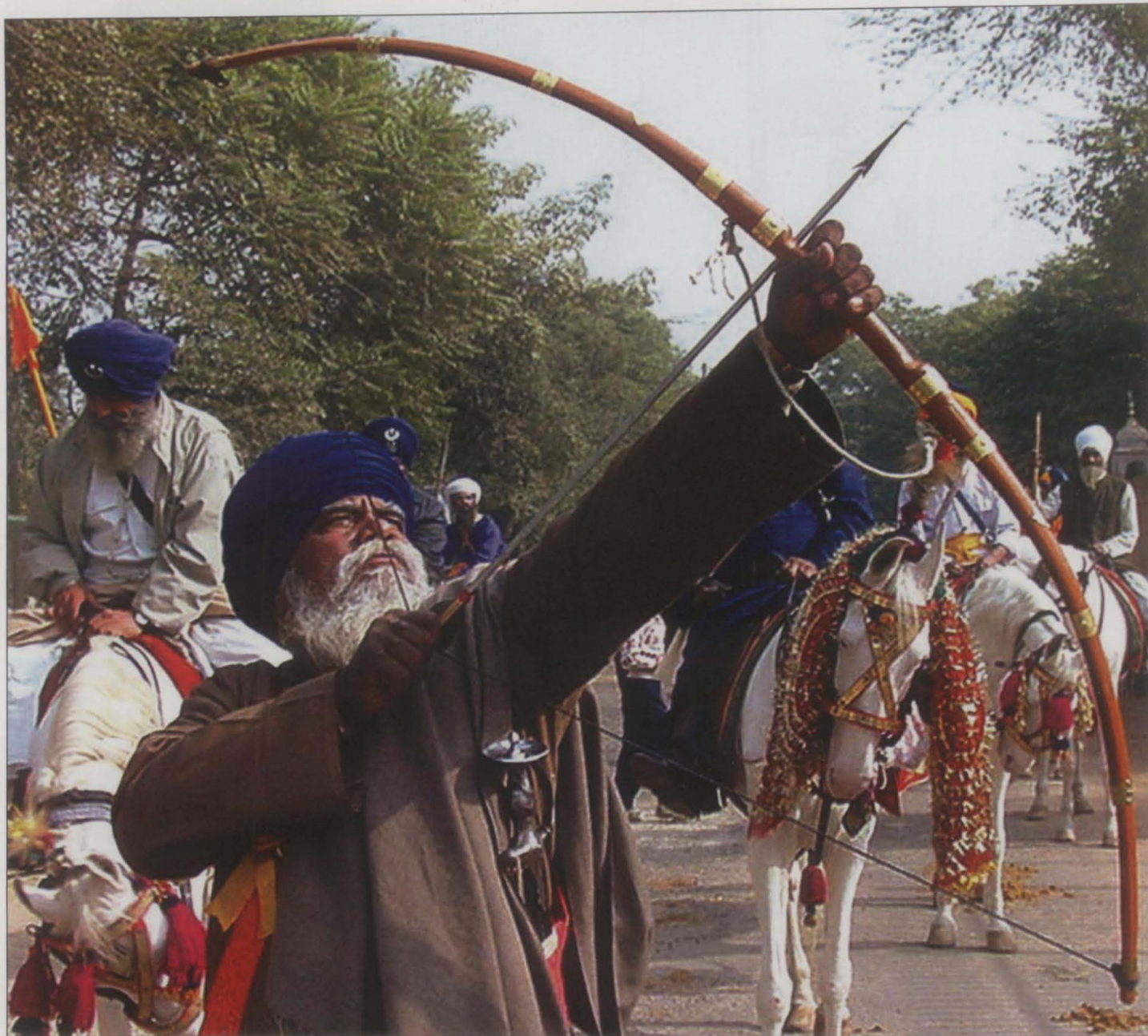


Gurdwara Damdama Sahib

Gurdwara Damdama Sahib near Humayun's tomb in Delhi marks the site where a meeting of the Emperor and the tenth Guru took place. Here they not only discussed war strategies but also witnessed bull-fighting and elephant fights. Hola Mohalla, the festival of the spring season, is celebrated with enthusiasm at this gurdwara.

*Below: A group of Nihangs during their journey from Gurdwara Damdama Sahib to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in the Capital
(Courtesy: Mukesh Agarwal, The Tribune)*

Facing page: Gurdwara Damdama Sahib





Banda Singh Bahadur

Before his demise in October 1708 Guru Gobind Singh had established contact with Banda Bahadur, a mendicant from Poonch, who was then spending his time on the banks of the Godavari in Nanded. He gave Banda Singh the military command of the Sikhs in Panjab and charged him with the obligation to protect people from the oppression of Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind. During his northward journey Banda Bahadur had come to know that an assassin sent by Wazir Khan had stabbed Guru Gobind Singh.

Inspired by his contact with the tenth guru, Banda came back to Panjab and, within a few months, captured power in several parts of the state. His mode of winning over people was both simple and direct. He took the stand that land belonged to those who tilled it. This led to a kind of peasant uprising in the state. Unlike several parts of India where feudalism was, and continues to be, strong, Punjab has had a system of land tenure where peasant proprietorship was the norm. This was mainly owing to what Banda had done in the early 18th century. Thousands of people rallied around him and in battle after battle he defeated those who had been sent to capture him.

Determined to punish the bloodthirsty tyrant of Sirhind and his accomplice, Sucha Nand, Banda marched with his swelling army upon that city. The downtrodden peasants who had been liberated from the slavery of the feudal lords and made complete owners and masters of the land they tilled, joined him in large numbers. Sirhind was sacked. Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand were killed. The murderers of Pir Budhu Shah, the Sufi saint of Sadhaura who had stood by Guru Gobind Singh, were also punished. The whole province of Sirhind was occupied. New coins were struck and the sovereignty of the Khalsa was established over nearly the whole of Panjab, east of Lahore, up to the Jammu hills. The Hindu chiefs of the Shivalik hills who had constantly caused trouble to Guru Gobind Singh and helped Mughal armies in the destruction of Anandpur were also chastised.

According to John Malcolm, if Bahadur Shah had not left the Deccan, which he did in 1710, there is every reason to believe

that "the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these invaders". Bahadur Shah mobilized the entire Mughal army against Banda. For nearly five years, Banda and his men remained a terror to the Mughals till at last the imperial armies, helped by the Hindu chiefs of the hill states, laid siege to his army at Gurdas Nangal where, after eight months of fighting, Banda and his men were captured.

Banda Bahadur was heavily chained and locked in an iron cage and brought to Delhi. Many of his followers were executed at Chandni Chowk in Delhi. On the day of his execution, Banda Singh Bahadur was taken to the Qutab Minar. His companions, Baj Singh and Ajai Singh, were executed one by one in his presence. Then he was dragged from his iron cage and dressed in a mock, princely robe embroidered with gold and a scarlet turban. He was placed on an elephant and, with twenty-six other Sikhs in chains marching behind him, was taken through the streets of the city to the shrine of Khawaja Qutab-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Here he was made to circumambulate the tomb of Bahadur Shah. Heads of his comrades were paraded on pikes all around him.

Below: A painting depicting Banda Bahadur in a cage and his companions being executed in his presence

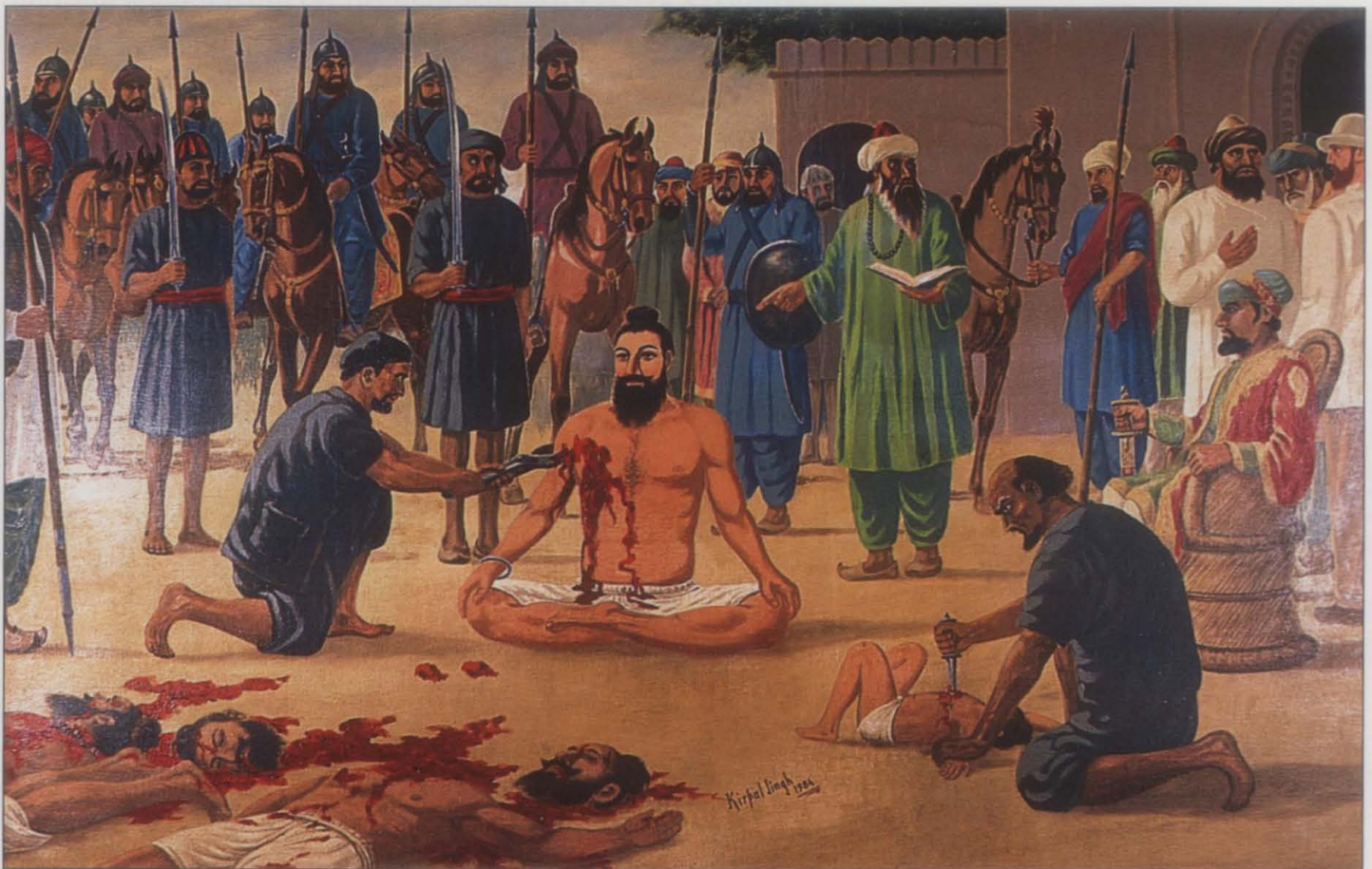


He was given the usual choice between Islam and death. Banda chose death. His son, Ajai Singh, was placed in his lap and he was asked to cut his throat which he refused to do. His child was then cut into pieces and his heart taken out and put into Banda's mouth. Banda's eyes were pulled out. His hands and feet were chopped off. His flesh was then torn with red hot pincers. Finally he was decapitated and hacked to pieces, limb by limb.

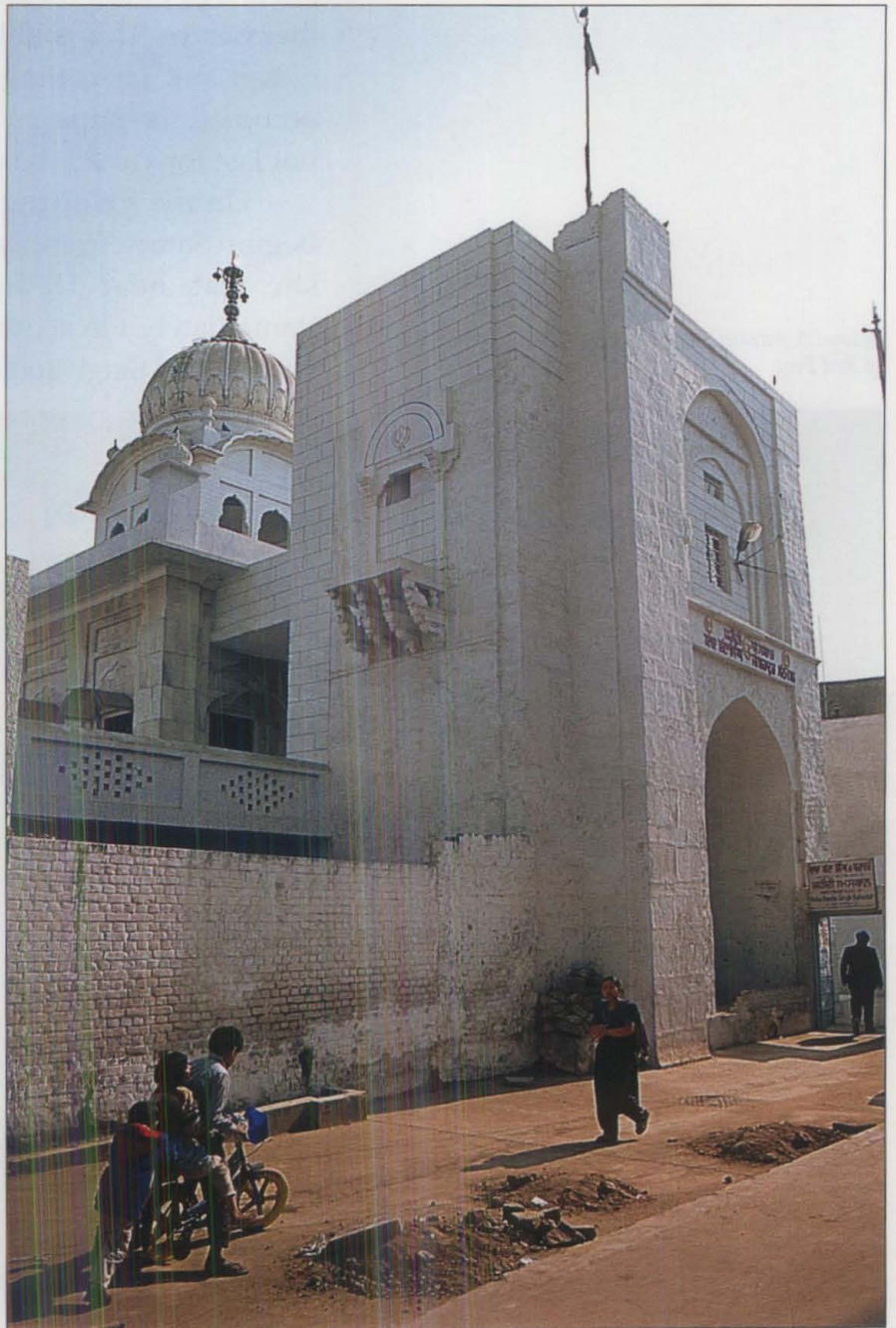
Banda Singh remained composed and unruffled amidst these tortures, completely acquiescent in the will of God and the guru, and died with his faith unshaken. It is also remarkable that no Sikh abandoned his camp in the face of certain death. Gurdwara Banda Singh Bahadur in Mehrauli marks the site where this heinous event took place.

Without going into further details, it should be clear by now that both because of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom and the systematic slaughter of several hundreds of Banda's

Below: A painting depicting Banda Singh Bahadur's young son being killed before his own execution



followers, Chandni Chowk occupies a central place in Sikh psyche. These developments gave a new turn to Sikh history. It was therefore logical that, after the Mughal power declined and the Sikhs were able to capture Delhi, even though briefly, they should have turned their attention to building some kind of a memorial for those who laid down their lives to defend their religious freedom.



Right: Gurdwara built in the memory of
Banda Singh Bahadur, Mehrauli

Occupation of Red Fort

It was in 1783, that one of the Sikh *misl* leaders, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, decided to attack Delhi. He was based in Hissar and had come to Delhi from there. At the same time, another Sikh *misl* leader by the name of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia also decided to march to Delhi from Panjab.

According to leading Panjab historian, Hari Ram Gupta, on 11 March, 1783, the two Sikh *misldars* entered the Red Fort. No one opposed them. Both the Emperor and his courtiers hid themselves. This enabled the Sikh soldiers to enter the *Dewan-e-Aam* and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia created history when he occupied the imperial throne. However, this arrangement did not last for varied reasons.

On the following day, the Mughal Emperor summoned Begum Samru from Hansi to play the role of a mediator. Since she was near Delhi, she responded to the summons immediately. On arrival in Delhi, she entered into negotiations with Baghel Singh and the two worked out a set of arrangements

Below: A painting depicting Sikh chiefs in control of Red Fort



between the Mughal court and the Sikh troops. According to what was agreed upon, a major portion of the Sikh army was to go back to Panjab but Baghel Singh was to remain in the capital with 4,000 troops at his command.

He established his headquarters in what is now called Tis Hazari where the district courts are located. He was allowed to build seven gurdwaras at different places which were associated with the Sikh gurus. Since this would cost some money, Baghel Singh was permitted to keep 37.5 per cent of the income of the octroi levied in the capital. It was also agreed that the construction of the gurdwaras would be completed by the end of the year by when the Sikh troops would withdraw. It was during those eight months of his stay at Delhi that Baghel Singh turned his attention to the construction of Gurdwara Sis Ganj and other historic gurdwaras.

Interview with the Emperor

Before providing any further details of what Baghel Singh was able to accomplish, it would be pertinent to cite another incident which throws a certain amount of light on how Sikh *misls* viewed the Mughals and what was their outlook on various issues. But for some of these reservations, the *misls* could have occupied Delhi, thereby inaugurating a new chapter in the history of India.

When the construction was finished by the month of November 1783, it was time for Baghel Singh to go back to Panjab as agreed upon during the negotiations with Begum Samru. As a prelude to that event, Baghel Singh sent a message to the Emperor and expressed his gratitude for all the cooperation that he had received. All this time, there had been no occasion for a meeting between Baghel Singh and the Mughal ruler, Shah Alam II.

Everyone who had met Baghel Singh had come back with glowing accounts of his gentleness and sobriety. This prompted the Mughal Emperor to ask for a meeting with him. When this proposal was made to Baghel Singh, he expressed his inability to do so for a reason which somewhat shocked the people who had never imagined or anticipated that such a reason could be advanced. Baghel Singh said that he and his comrades had taken a vow never to bow before any Mughal. This was unexpected and it left everyone speechless.

However, the problem was soon resolved in an ingenious manner. Baghel Singh said that he would be prepared to go to the Red Fort but he would not go alone. Instead, he would be accompanied by a contingent of his troops and each one of them would be fully armed. Not only that, he said, while passing through the streets, if anybody said anything unbecoming or provocative, he would not be responsible how his soldiers reacted. All this was unexpected but, after some deliberation, the negotiators found them acceptable.

On the appointed day, the local administration announced that the residents should keep indoors so that there was no possibility of confrontation. More than that, a high official of the Mughal court came along with a number of mace-bearers and announcers. Thereupon, Baghel Singh and his men started from Subzi Mandi in a procession. The announcers informed the people that the Sikh troops were coming. Behind them followed a group of Mughal mace-bearers. As to Baghel Singh, he had his full contingent of personal bodyguards on decorated horses and he himself sat on an elephant. To lend it a regal touch, one person waved a fly whisk made of peacock feathers over his head.

When they all entered the gate of Red Fort, Baghel Singh and four other sardars dismounted but the troopers remained on horseback. When they entered the *Dewan-e-Aam*, it was their guide who bowed on their behalf. As to the Sikhs, they shouted *Sat Sri Akal*, their customary slogan. The Prime Minister offered a chair to Baghel Singh. The other notables present in the court looked after those who had accompanied Baghel Singh. Usual courtesies were exchanged and, after a lively conversation, Baghel Singh was given a *khillat*, a necklace of pearls, a duly decorated elephant and some horses by the Emperor. Other sardars were also duly honoured.

To cap it all, the Emperor agreed to regularly send 12.5 per cent of the octroi duty realized in Delhi to his headquarters in Panjab. There was, however a condition attached: the Sikhs would not attack the capital again. It is difficult to say whether that condition was accepted because the *misl*s were not prepared to occupy Delhi or Delhi was a place which they could not administer for reasons of their own.

Locating the Exact Spot

When Baghel Singh and his men got down to the job of building a gurdwara on the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur had been martyred, something unexpected happened. Where exactly was the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur had been put to death? No one was precise about the exact location. For a whole century, the job of putting up a memorial had not been attended to. Therefore, Baghel Singh started making enquiries. After a good deal of effort, he met an old woman who told him that her husband had been a waterman and had sprinkled water on the spot where the actual incident had taken place. She took him there and showed him the exact spot.

It turned out that nearby there was a *banyan* tree where the guru had been martyred. On that spot, a mosque had already been built. Without making any more fuss about it,

Below: Chandni Chowk in mid nineteenth century



Baghel Singh started demolishing the mosque. Several hundred Sikhs were put on the job. As the demolition was in progress, thousands of Muslims living in the neighbourhood assembled there and wanted the demolition to be stopped. Baghel Singh confronted them and told them that whatever was being done was in consultation with the Emperor.

The matter was thereupon reported to the king who told the Muslim crowd that the Sikh *misls* had agreed to leave Delhi after having captured it on the basis of his assurance that the several sacred historical places connected with the lives of the gurus would be restored to them. Therefore, he was duty-bound to keep his word and whatever was being done had his concurrence. This upset the Muslim crowd but, given the weight of the Emperor's authority, they had no choice in the matter except to withdraw and disperse.

A local grandee named Sadat Ali Khan had led the mob. It occurred to Baghel Singh that the leader of the mob should also be tackled. He found out where his lands were situated. Those were not too far from Delhi. Bhagel Singh sent some of his men to plunder his lands. They did it so successfully that Sadat Ali Khan decided that discretion was the better part of

Below: An old painting of the kotwali. On the extreme right is Sunheri Masjid from where the kazi issued a fatwah pronouncing execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur



valour. He made up with Baghel Singh and even reported the terms of agreement to the Emperor who, in turn, granted a *jagir* in Pipli village in Haryana to the gurdwara. Soon after Baghel Singh left, the gurdwara was demolished and a mosque was built again. There was no resident Sikh in Delhi at that time to look after any gurdwara, whether it was Gurdwara Sis Ganj or any other.

The British Period

For the next half century, hardly anything happened to change the situation. Gurdwara Sis Ganj and other gurdwaras that Bhagel Singh had built were demolished and mosques were re-erected. After the Mutiny in 1857, when things settled down, Raja Sarup Singh of Jind requested the British Government to demolish the mosque in Chandni Chowk area and allow a gurdwara to be constructed there. This was done. But once again, there was mob action and the gurdwara was pulled down. Ultimately the issue was taken to the court. The Calcutta High Court accepted the plea of the Delhi Muslims and allowed a mosque to be built.

Meanwhile Raja Sarup Singh who had taken the first initiative died. His son, Raja Ranbir Singh, took the matter to the Privy Council in London. The verdict this time was in favour of the Sikhs. Therefore, the mosque was demolished and the gurdwara was rebuilt in 1861. Without going into further details, it may be added here that in 1930 a group of enterprising Sikhs in Delhi pulled down the old building and put up a new, imposing building which is to be seen even today. It is a tall building and its golden dome can be seen from a distance.

Next to the gurdwara was the *kotwali* (police station) which had existed since the Mughal days. For some time, Guru Tegh Bahadur had been kept in an iron cage in that *kotwali*. A couple of decades ago, the *kotwali* was handed over to Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee so that it had more area as compared to what it used to have. While the well from which the guru had taken his bath before his martyrdom still exists, the historic banyan tree under which his actual execution had taken place was pulled down and a new building was put up in its place.





Gurdwara Rakab Ganj

Near the Central Secretariat of the Government of India is another gurdwara which too is connected with the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. During the Mughal period, the spot where Gurdwara Rakab Ganj stands today was the residence of the Mughal kings' bodyguards. It was also a storehouse for *rakabs* or stirrups. It is for that reason that this particular gurdwara is still known as Gurdwara Rakab Ganj.

After Guru Tegh Bahadur had been beheaded, his body lay unattended for quite some time. One of the guru's devotees was a businessman—Lakhi Shah Vanjara. On that particular day, he was engaged in transporting heavy cotton bales in his carts. Taking advantage of the darkness, he promptly lifted the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur and concealed it by putting cotton bales on top of it. He took the body to Raisina village where he lived. The body was taken into the house and the whole

Facing page: During a festival in Gurdwara Rakab Ganj

Below: Gurpurab celebration in Lakhi Shah Vanjara Hall, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj



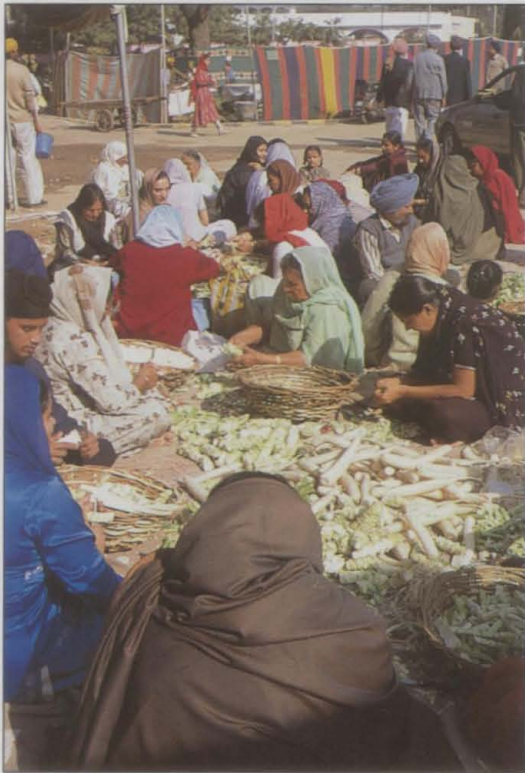
building was set on fire. When the fire subsided, he collected the ashes and put them in a copper urn and buried them right there. Another devout Sikh, Bhai Jaita, carried the head of the Guru to Anandpur where Guru's son Guru Gobind Singh cremated it with due ceremony. Later a gurdwara was built there which is also known as Gurdwara Sis Ganj.

As in the case of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, a mosque had come up here also. When Baghel Singh, accompanied by his troops, reached there to undertake the construction of a gurdwara building, once again there was confrontation with the local people. Hundreds of Muslim residents collected there and the matter could have gone out of hand. Once again, Baghel Singh showed both presence of mind and adroitness in handling the situation. He told everyone present there that if, after digging up the place, a copper urn containing the ashes of the guru was found, the gurdwara would be constructed there. If the urn containing the guru's ashes was not found, the mosque would be allowed to stand. When the earth was dug, his contention proved right and a copper urn was found as anticipated. This silenced everybody present there and the gurdwara was constructed without any opposition.

This history of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj being built after a mosque had been demolished was repeated after the Mutiny also. Gurdwara Rakab Ganj was demolished and replaced by a mosque. As in the case of Gurdwara Sis Ganj, the matter was taken to the High Court and then to the Privy Council. The judgement given was in favour of a gurdwara and a new building was constructed on the site.

Below left: Langar being prepared in Gurdwara Rakab Ganj

Below right: Stalls are often put up during festivals to sell Sikh religious literature and Sikh symbols like kara, kanga and kirpan



Confrontation with the British

When the British decided to build their capital in Delhi, the site where the Central Secretariat stands today was selected as the most appropriate. When plans were being drawn up, there arose a dispute between the Government of India and the Sikhs. The government demolished a portion of the boundary wall of the gurdwara. However, there was a strong reaction to this act of desecration. A *morcha* was launched for the restoration of the demolished wall. The First World War had just started and the government did not want confrontation with the Sikhs. Therefore, the government accepted the contention of the Sikhs and the demolished portion of the wall was rebuilt. A new magnificent building was added some years later.

In addition to the main building, a new hall named after Lakhi Shah Vanjara was built in memory of the man who had successfully removed Guru Tegh Bahadur's body in those unsettled conditions and had the ingenuity and devotion to burn his house and all his belongings.

Currently Gurdwara Rakab Ganj also houses the office of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC). The *Prakash Divas* of Guru Gobind Singh is celebrated here. To mark the occasion a procession is taken out from here to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. There are various other activities due to which the gurdwara is well known. It has a nursery which distributes saplings free of cost. A turban-tying competition is also held here in which young Sikh boys enthusiastically participate.

Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

After the two gurdwaras connected with Guru Tegh Bahadur who was put to death under the orders of Aurangzeb in 1675, it would be in order to turn to another gurdwara which is connected with the life of Guru Harkrishan.

For more than two centuries, the Sikh gurus had become a social and political force in Panjab. The government of the day, therefore, always kept an eye on what was happening within the Sikh fraternity. Several of the Sikh gurus had had visits from the earlier Emperors and there had been close



Above: A painting of Guru Harkrishan

interaction between the rulers and the Sikh gurus.

When Guru Harkrishan became the eighth guru, his elder brother, Ram Rai, did not reconcile himself to the latter's claim having been passed over. An earlier conduct of Ram Rai had raised misgivings about his effort to involve Emperor Aurangzeb in the internal affairs of the Sikh community. He had even threatened to mobilize public opinion against his own brother. This became the thin end of the wedge and Aurangzeb summoned Guru Harkrishan to his court. His intention was to intervene in the matter and take things into his hands.

When the Emperor's summons reached Guru Harkrishan at Kiratpur, he refused to respond. Some of his followers too thought that it was the right thing to do. Raja Jai Singh, who was one of Aurangzeb's important court nobles, intervened at

Below: A painting depicting Guru Harkrishan blessing the sangat in Delhi

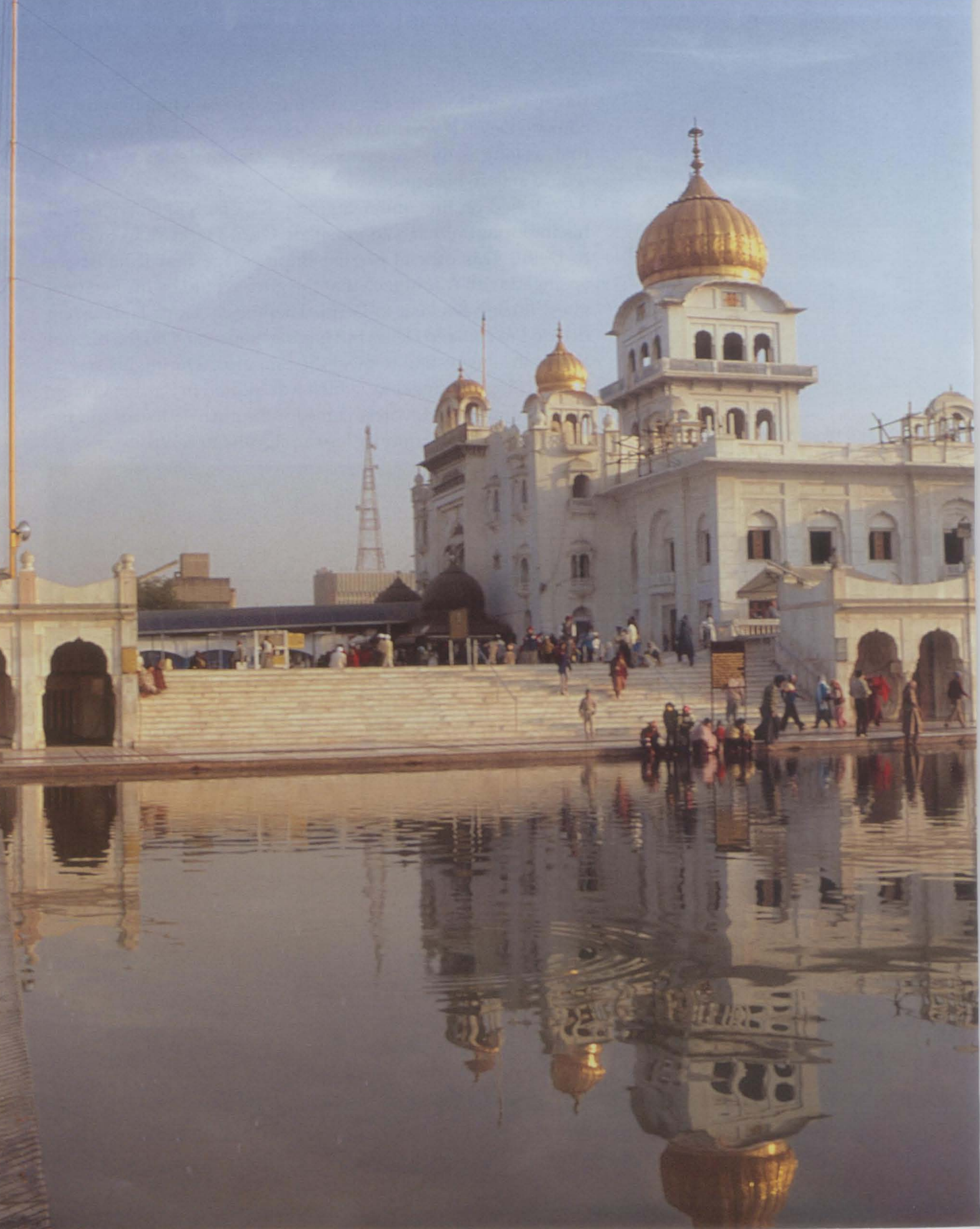


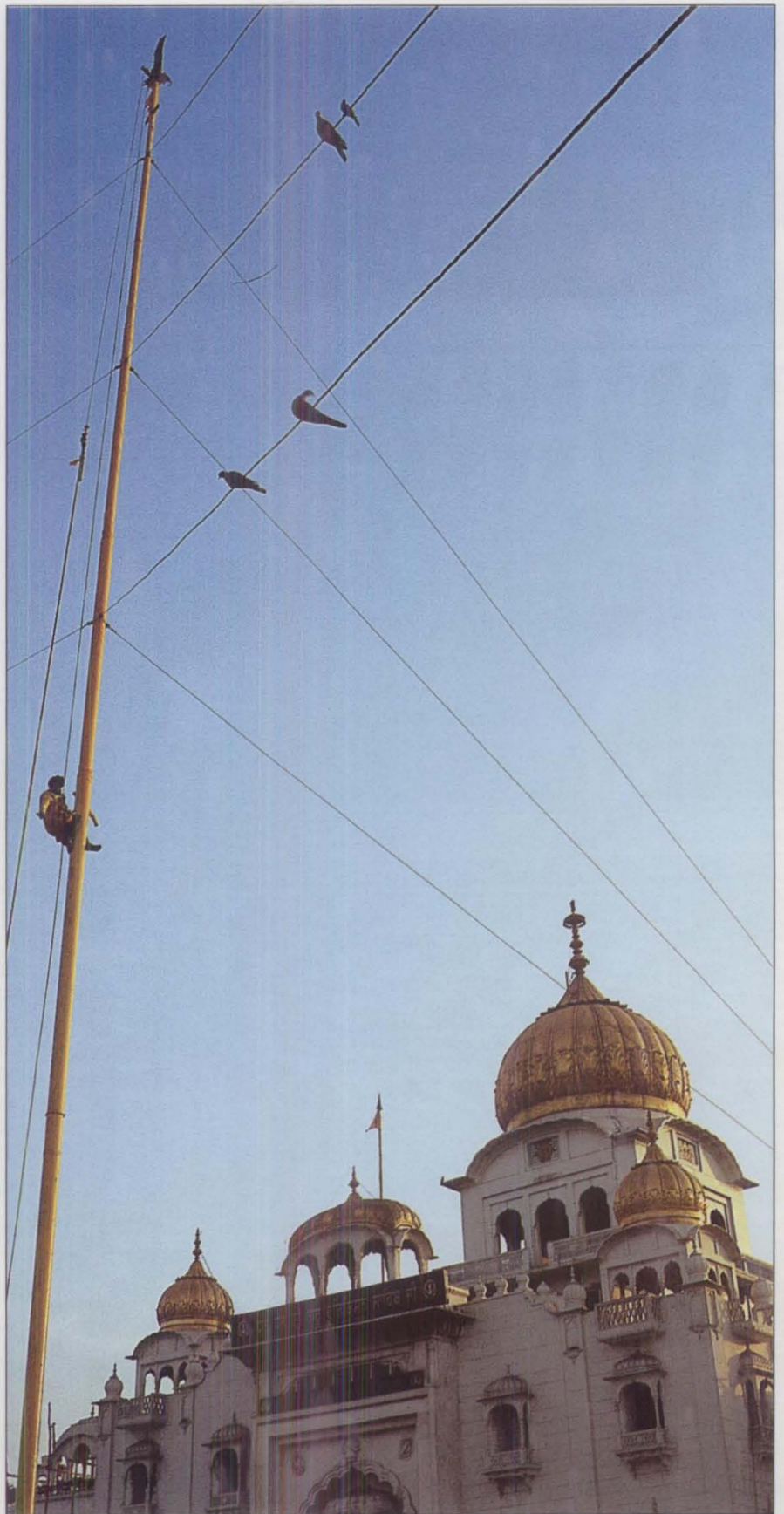
this stage and took the responsibility of persuading the guru to come to Delhi. It was also settled between him and Aurangzeb that, as long as the succession issue was not decided, the guru would stay in his bungalow.

Based on this understanding, Raja Jai Singh sent one of his important officials to persuade Guru Harkrishan to come to Delhi. This official carried the message that it had been arranged with Aurangzeb that the guru would be his personal guest during his visit to Delhi. Thereupon, Guru Harkrishan decided to come to Delhi; but having come to Delhi, he did not accept the suggestion to meet the Emperor. During his stay at Raja Jai Singh's bungalow, which was located in Raisina village, a large number of devotees came for the guru's *darshan* and the place had become more or less a pilgrimage centre.

Below: A painting depicting Guru Harkrishan giving healing touch to the leprosy patients in Delhi



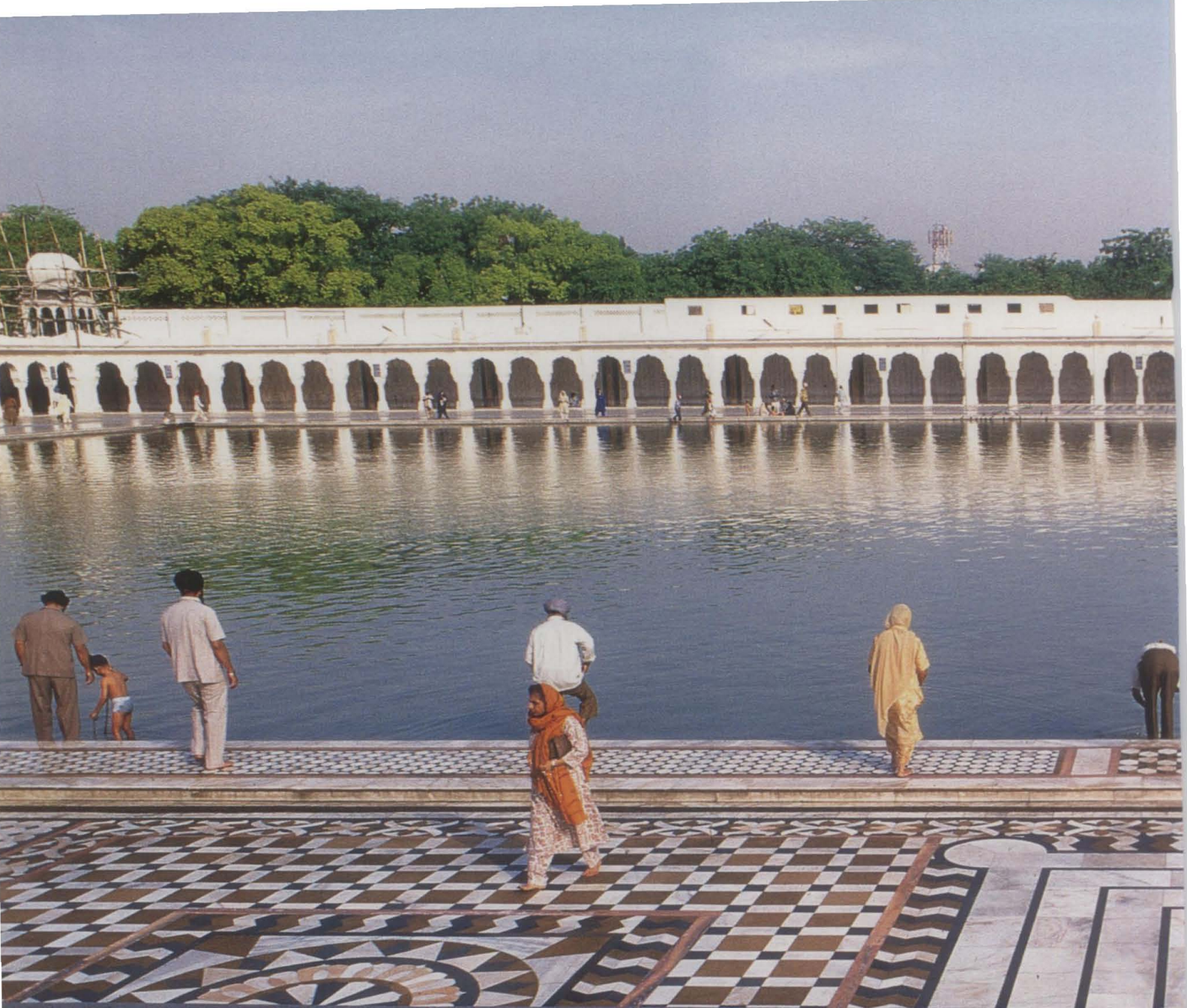


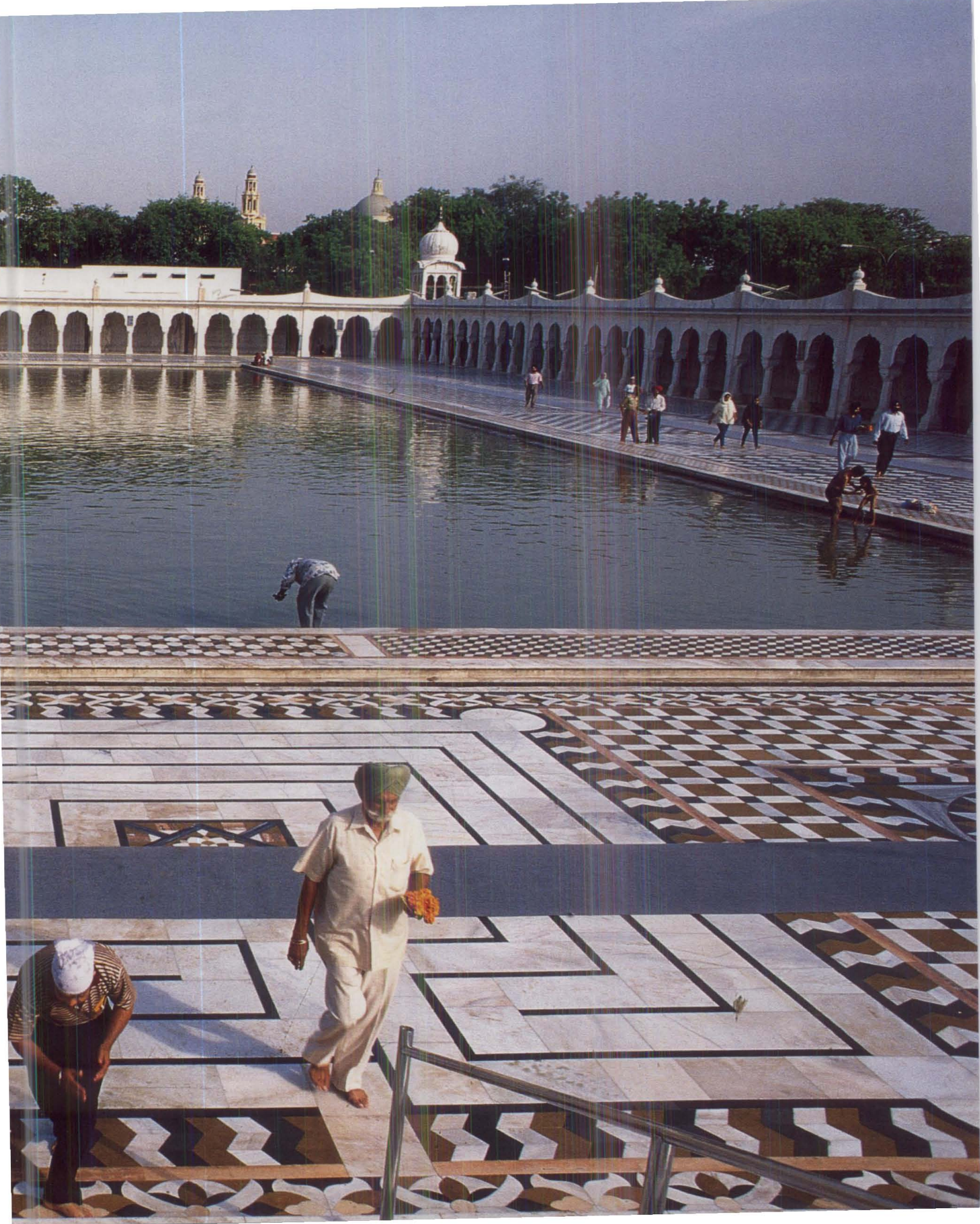


Facing page: Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

Right: Sewadar changing the chola of Nishan Sahib

*Following double spread: Parikrama of the sarovar
at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib*



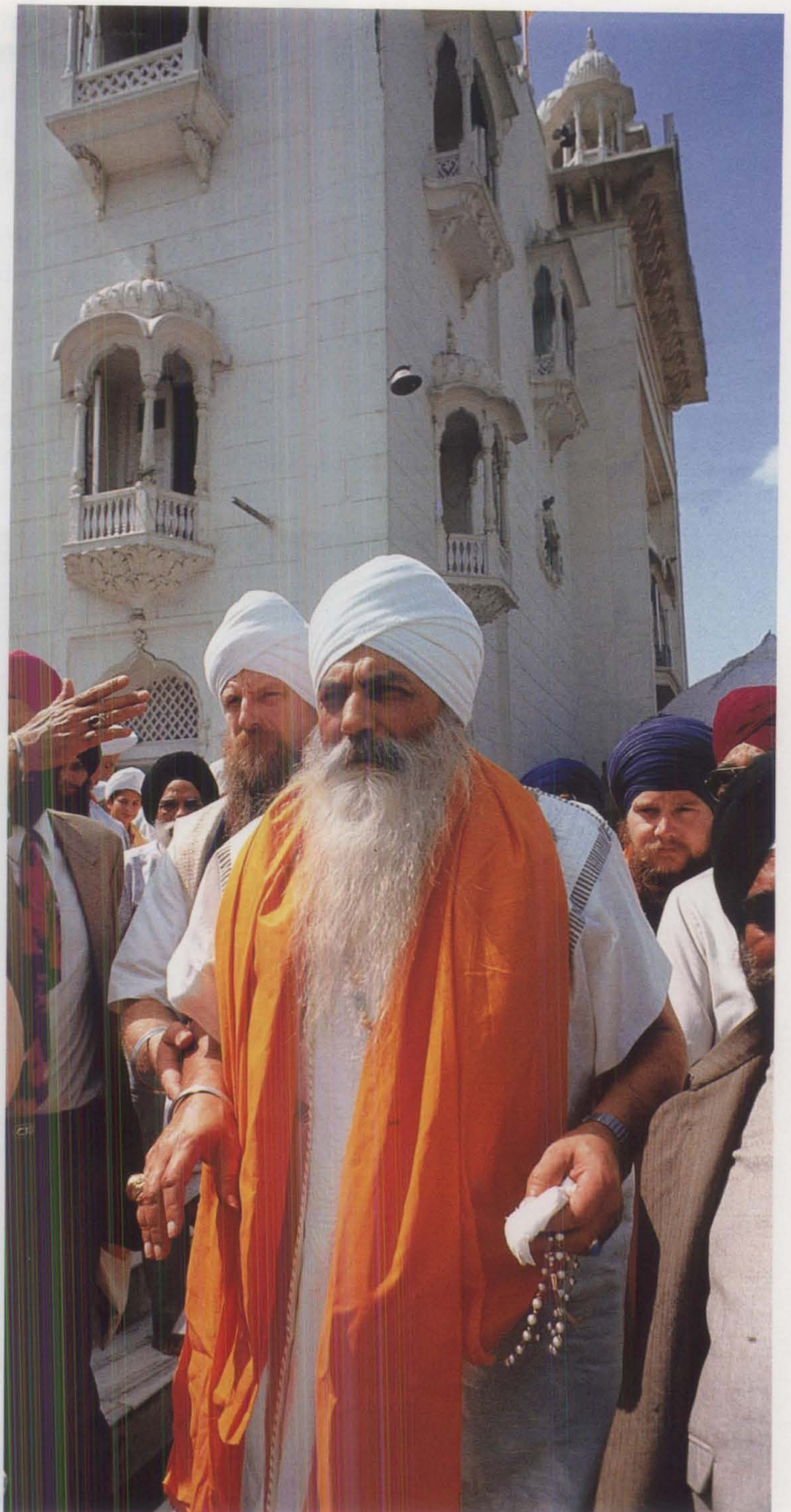




Facing page: American Sikhs during their visit to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

Below: American Sikhs in their blue cholas at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

Right: Harbhajan Singh Yogi, founder of the Sikh Dharma in the Western Hemisphere, in Bangla Sahib



Guru Harkrishan stayed at Raja Jai Singh's bungalow (hence the name *Bangla Sahib*) for quite some weeks without having a meeting with Emperor Aurangzeb. It so happened that during this period he caught smallpox and passed away within the next few days. He was not even eight years of age at that time.

Of late, Gurdwara Bangla Sahib has become immensely popular. A large number of devotees visit the gurdwara everyday. One reason is that the water collected in *Chobacha Sahib* (spring) is believed to have healing powers. A new tank has been constructed in the gurdwara premises and is very popular with the visitors. Another reason for it is the location of the gurdwara; it is only a few hundred yards from Connaught Place and is easily accessible.

Below: Budhist, Hindu and Christian religious leaders being honoured in Gurdwara Bangla Sahib

Facing page: (above) Bhai Ajit Singh and his jatha performing shabad-kirtan in the Rashtrapati Bhawan

(below) Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations in Rashtrapati Bhawan. Seen in the picture are Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the President of India; Sh. L. K. Advani, Deputy Prime Minister; Mrs. Advani; Dr. Najma Heptulla, Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha; Sh. Vijay Kapur, Lt. Governor of Delhi; S. P. S. Sarna, S. Tarlochan Singh; S. Arjan Singh, first Marshal of the Indian Air Force; and other prominent Sikhs of Delhi





Gurdwara Bala Sahib

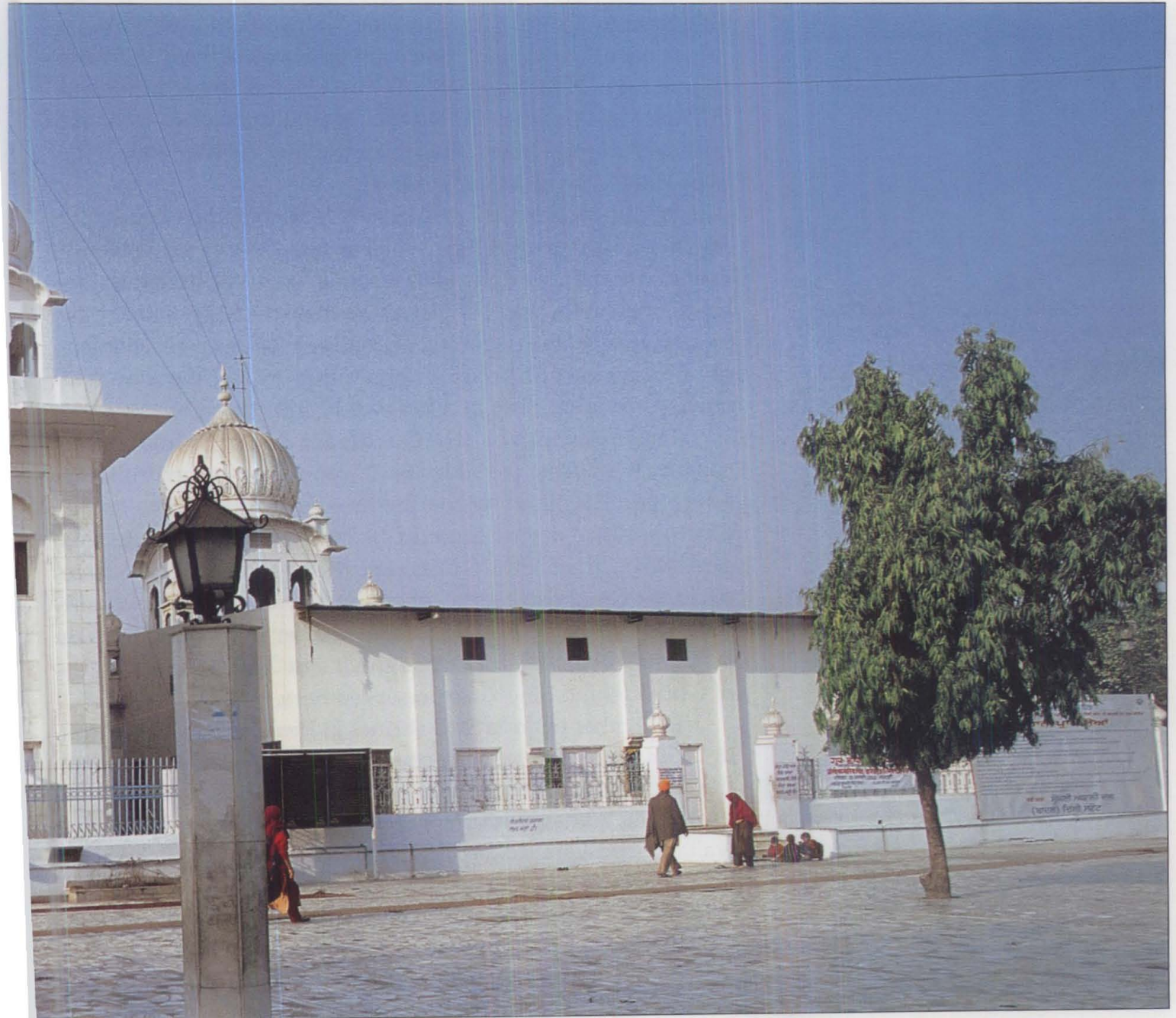
When Guru Harkrishan was taken ill, it was because of smallpox. During those days, smallpox was almost an incurable disease. After the attack of this disease, he survived only for a few days and then passed away. His body was cremated on the banks of the river Yamuna and Gurdwara Bala Sahib was built

Below: Gurdwara Bala Sahib



in his memory.

This gurdwara is situated on the Outer Ring Road and is at quite some distance from other centres of urban concentration. To provide medical facilities, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee is currently building a major hospital and medical centre in the vast campus of this gurdwara.



Gurdwara Mata Sundari

When Guru Gobind Singh went south, his wife, Mata Sundari, stayed on in Delhi. When the Guru was about to leave, Mata Sundari made a request to her husband to agree to a proposal to adopt a child who resembled her eldest son, Ajit Singh, who had died in one of the battles. Guru Gobind Singh was not enthusiastic about it but, on her insistence, he agreed. At the same time, he warned her that facial resemblance was not what really mattered; what mattered was how a person thought and acted. However, the Sikhs of Delhi provided a *haveli* near Ajmeri Gate where Mata Sundari lived with her adopted son. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded in 1708, Mata Sundari shifted to a specially constructed house outside Turkman Gate. During her lifetime the residence came to be called Haveli Mata Sundari.

While residing at this *haveli*, Mata Sundari became a rallying point for the Sikhs. A large number of people would visit her and the various Sikh festivals were celebrated at this residence. She was in contact with what was happening at the Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar and guided the people in a variety of ways. It would be no exaggeration to say that she had qualities of leadership and her word carried weight.

The building of the Gurdwara Mata Sundari was constructed during the Sikh rule. It was a three-storied building which had bay windows on the first floor and a dome on the rooftop. Since a vast amount of land was attached to this gurdwara, the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee decided to establish a girls' college on its premises. A handsome building has come up and is named after Mata Sundari. The gurdwara is being rebuilt through *kar seva*. Two historic swords of Guru Gobind Singh are preserved here.

Like other historic Sikh shrines in Panjab, the Sikh shrines in Delhi were also being managed by *pujaris* and *mahants* till the Akali movement for Gurdwara Reform (1920-25) began. In a way, the Sikh agitation for the restoration of the boundary wall of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj demolished by the government in 1914 became a precursor of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. Agitation over the Rakab Ganj issue brought the Sikh shrines in Delhi to the forefront of the Akali movement and paved the way for the Panthic management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi. A

Below: Historic weapons of Guru Gobind Singh being displayed in Mata Sundri Gurdwara

Facing page: Gurdwara Mata Sundri







seven-member committee was formed. It consisted of one member from the Durbar Sahib, Amritsar, and one member each from the four Takhats—Sri Akal Takhat, Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Takhat Patna Sahib and Takhat Hazoor Sahib, Nanded. The remaining two members were to be nominated by the princely states, the Chief Khalsa Diwan and Singh Sabhas. Since the above seven member committee did not have any representative of the Delhi Sikhs, the committee could not play an effective role in the management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi.

Police firing on Gurdwara Sis Ganj during the civil disobedience movement in 1930 brought the Sikhs of Delhi and their historic shrines in the forefront of the Indian struggle for freedom. At the same time it made the Sikhs realize the need to have a say in the proper management of the historic shrines of Delhi. Sardar Basakha Singh and Sardar Narain Singh, who had played an important role in the construction of the new building of Gurdwara Sis Ganj in 1939, remained associated with the management of the Sikh shrines in Delhi for a long time. In 1941, a constitution was prepared and registered under the Religious Endowments and Charitable Trusts Act of 1860 which provided for a fifteen-member body of management.

Migration of a large number of Sikhs to Delhi after the partition in 1947 resulted in Sikh shrines and their management playing a significant role both in the Sikh polity and national politics. The growing demand of the Sikhs of Delhi for an appropriate mode of management resulted in the Indian Parliament passing a Bill for the management of the historic Sikh shrines in 1971. Since then, the Sikh shrines in Delhi are being managed by Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee with its headquarters first in Gurdwara Sis Ganj, then in Gurdwara Mata Sundari and now in an independent building in the complex of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj. In spite of the usual ups and downs, the elected managements have greatly improved facilities in the historic gurdwaras.

In keeping with the Sikh tradition, the gurdwaras not only provide free meals to thousands of devotees and shelter to the needy but DSGMC has paid special attention to the spread of education and medical facilities in the national capital. Apart from running five colleges affiliated to the University of Delhi and a technical college affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, a number of polytechnics and schools

Facing page: Guru Nanak Foundation, built to mark the quincentenary of Guru Nanak's birthday

Below: Sikh girls performing shabad-kirtan

Following double spread: Morning assembly at Guru Harkrishan Public School, Vasant Vihar

Double spread pages 92-93: Langar being served during Bhai Vir Singh's birthday celebrations at Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan

Double spread pages 94-95: Gurdwara Greater Kailash I. On the left is seen Mata Gujri Public School





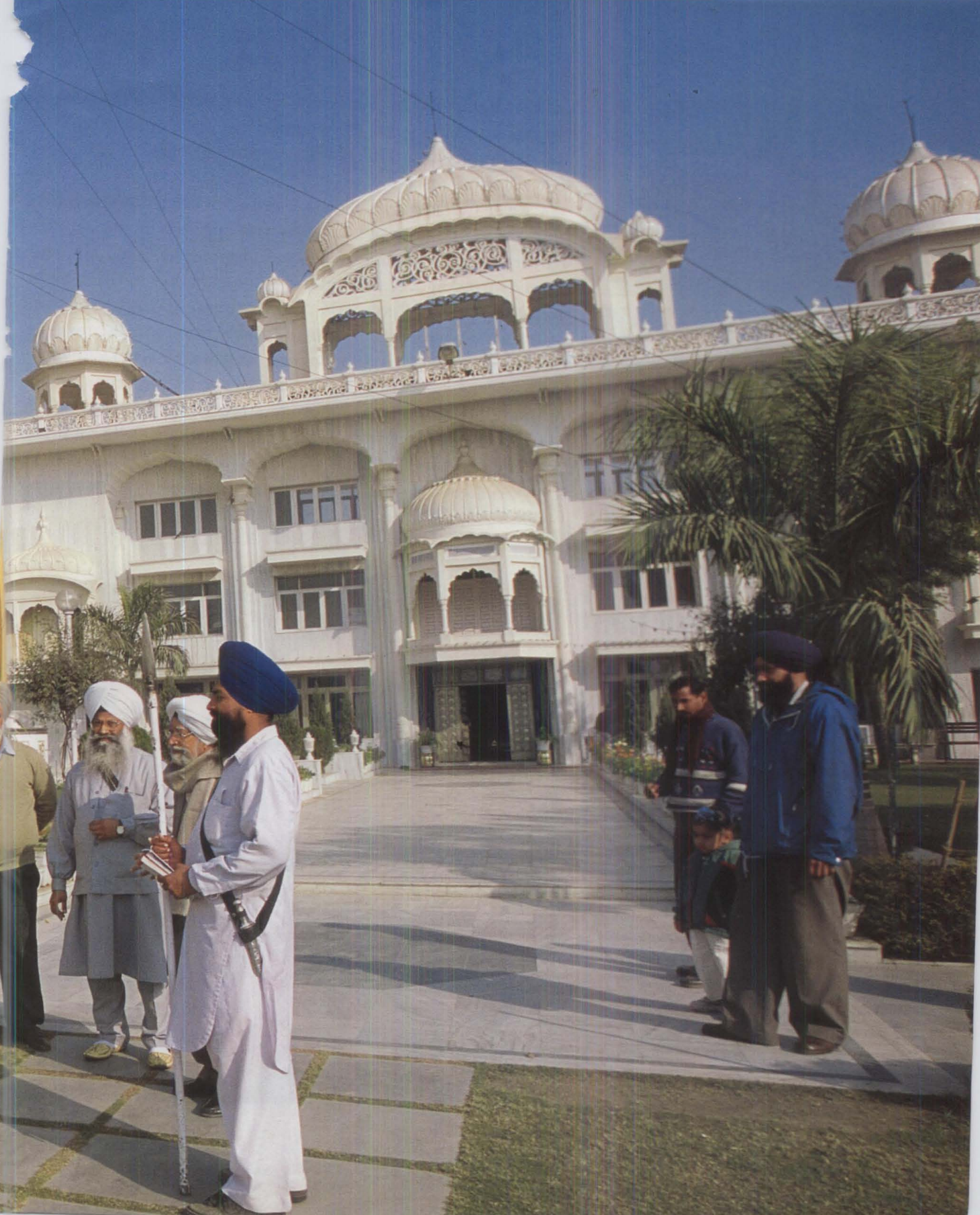






ATA GUJRI
PUBLIC SCHOOL







Above top: Trucks with relief material for Gujarat earthquake victims leaving from Gurdwara Rakab Ganj

Above: With the idea of saplings being offered as prasad, Sikh institutions in Delhi are playing an important role in improving the environs of the Capital.

Right: School children during a Nagar Kirtan

Below: Sikh gurdwaras in Delhi also provide health care services as part of seva.



are also being run by the committee. Through the medium of the *kar seva*, the buildings of gurdwaras have been expanded and modernized, and information centres and libraries attached to the gurdwaras.

Over the years, the Sikhs and their shrines have come to play an important role in different spheres in the capital. Through a number of educational institutions, hospitals and dispensaries successive managements of the shrines have greatly contributed towards the promotion of concept of *seva*. By attaching nurseries to most of the historic gurdwaras and encouraging tree plantation in a big way the Sikhs in Delhi have made a major contribution in improving the environs of the capital. With major focus on propagating the Sikh gurus' ideals of selfless service and sacrifice, the Sikh shrines in Delhi continue to attract devotees from all over India and abroad.

